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EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON RURAL LIFE

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drawn up by Governments*

UNITED KINGDOM



Series of League of Nations Publications

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE
ON RURAL LIFE

19



No. 10

On the edge of Dartmoor, England.

(Photograph by VAL DOONE, Ashford, supplied by the Travel and Industrial Development Association of Great Britain and Ireland.)

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FOREWORD

In Great Britain, increasing attention has been paid during the past two decades to the problem of improving conditions for those who work on the land.

Chapters I to IX contain an account of the measures, governmental and otherwise, which have been taken to raise the rural worker's standard of living and to add to the interest of his daily life. The memorandum furnished by the Government of Northern Ireland covers the same ground as regards Northern Ireland.

The bibliography on pages 77 to 81 will be a useful guide to those who wish to study in detail the varying rural conditions to be found in different parts of the United Kingdom.



No. 11

On the South Downs, Sussex, England :
the view from Firle Beacon.

(Photograph supplied by the Travel and Industrial Development Association of Great Britain and Ireland.)



No. 12

Harvest time under the Malvern Hills, Worcestershire, England.
(*Photograph supplied by the Travel and Industrial Development Association of Great Britain and Ireland.*)

I. AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Agricultural research and education contributes very materially to the welfare of those living in the countryside. The aim of agricultural research is to improve the position of the farmer and the farm-worker—and through them, all those engaged in ancillary occupations in rural areas—by placing at their disposal improvements in the material and the methods of their industry. Such improvements relate to methods of cultivation, varieties of crops and kinds of live-stock, manuring of crops and feeding of live-stock, measures for combating diseases of plants and animals, machinery and implements, and in fact, the whole range of the technique and management of agricultural enterprise. It is not enough, however, for such improvements to be rendered available to the agricultural community; knowledge of them must be communicated to the individual farmer, their application to his own circumstances must be determined, and the farmer must be trained to be able to take advantage of new discoveries and to appreciate their value in comparison with existing methods. This latter task is the province of agricultural education.

Agricultural research and education therefore, taken together, seek to equip the agriculturist technically, so that he may obtain the maximum return for his effort while maintaining or increasing the fertility of the land. Agricultural education has a further important rôle to play, by increasing the knowledge of the meaning of the life of the countryside to add to the interest of those engaged on the land in their work and in their daily life generally.

The benefits which agricultural research has brought may be appreciated by considering, briefly, some of the improvements in the material and methods of the agricultural industry to which reference has been made above. Yields of crops and grass have, for example, been increased through the application of artificial manures, either in addition to organic manures, or in replacement of the latter where these have not been available; the discovery and use of these artificial manures rests on investigations carried out by the research workers on soils. Similarly, research on farmyard manure has led to a process for the "artificial" production of dung and so has assisted to supply the deficiency in such manure—*e.g.*, for market-garden crops—resulting from the decline in the number of horses in towns. The principal research station for soil work in England and Wales is the Rothamsted Experimental Station at Harpenden, Hertfordshire, and, in Scotland, the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research at Aberdeen.

Yields of crops and grass have also been increased—and the quality has been improved—as the result of work carried out at other research stations set up for the breeding and testing of new varieties and for investigations on the management of grass land. The principal stations for this work are the Plant-breeding Station at Cambridge University, the Welsh Plant-breeding Station at Aberystwyth, the National Institute of Agricultural Botany at Cambridge, and the Scottish Society for Research in Plant-breeding at Corstorphine, Edinburgh. The wheats bred at the Cambridge Institute and the pasture plants bred at the Aberystwyth Institute have been of great value in English agriculture ; the value of improved crop varieties for differing local conditions is tested out at stations maintained by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany ; this latter Institute has also rendered material assistance in the introduction and testing of varieties of sugar-beet suitable for this country.

The horticultural industry has received much help from the research worker both in regard to the material placed at his disposal and to measures for the protection of his trees and plants against pests and diseases. Thus the classification of root stocks of fruit-trees has enabled the fruit-grower to choose the kind which he requires for his purpose ; again, methods of pruning have been vastly improved as a result of the investigations of the horticultural research worker ; sprays and washes against numerous pests and suitable methods of application have also been devised. The grower of glass-house crops has shared in the benefits brought by the research worker, not only as regards the varieties of his crops and his technique but also in the combating of pests. The horticultural research stations in this country include the Agricultural and Horticultural Research Station, Long Ashton, Bristol, the Horticultural Research Station at Cambridge University, the John Innes Horticultural Institution, Merton, London, the East Malling Research Station, East Malling, Kent, and the Experimental and Research Station, Cheshunt, Herts.

Passing from crops to animals, a large volume of knowledge on the feeding of farm animals and poultry, whether for the production of meat, milk or eggs, has been accumulated as a result of investigations by research workers in animal nutrition. Knowledge of new feeding-stuffs has been obtained ; the values of different constituents of foods have been determined, and principles have been worked out for the compounding of rations for different classes of stock for various purposes. Again, there has been expansion in the milk industry in Great Britain and much knowledge has been placed by the dairy research worker at the disposal of the milk producer on methods of milk production and handling. Very difficult problems are set by the prevalence of animal diseases of various kinds, but here

again the research worker stands behind the practitioner and the discoveries of the former have materially assisted the work of the latter. The elaboration of preventive agents has removed the menace of many diseases of animals and the incidence of disease has been reduced with the help of diagnostic tests devised by the research worker.

Among the research stations in England, those chiefly concerned in work on animal nutrition and dairying are the Animal Nutrition Institute, Cambridge University, the National Institute of Poultry Husbandry, Harper Adams Agricultural College, Newport, Shropshire, and the National Institute for Research in Dairying at Shinfield, near Reading. There are also four research stations concerned with animal pathology—namely, the Institute for Research in Animal Pathology at the Royal Veterinary College in London, the Institute of Animal Pathology at Cambridge University, the Institute for Research in Animal Pathology, Ministry's Veterinary Laboratory, New Haw, Weybridge, and the Institute of Agricultural Parasitology of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, St. Albans.

Owing to the importance of animal husbandry in the Scottish farming system, research work in Scotland has been directed mainly towards problems connected with farm animals, and the Rowett Research Institute (Animal Nutrition) at Aberdeen, the Institute of Animal Genetics at Edinburgh University, the Animal Diseases Research Association, Moredun Institute, Edinburgh, and the Hannah Dairy Research Institute at Ayr have done valuable work in effecting improvements in the scientific rationing of live-stock, in providing means of protection against diseases, especially those affecting sheep stock, and in solving problems connected with the important dairying industry in the south-west of Scotland.

The foregoing account will, it is hoped, have sufficiently shown the benefits conferred by the research worker on those living in the countryside; there are, however, further research institutes dealing with such subjects as small animal breeding, agricultural engineering and agricultural economics. There are, in fact, twenty-six research institutes in all in Great Britain and these are either departments of universities or are independently governed. They are not Government institutes, neither are their staffs civil servants (with one exception); they are, however, financed almost entirely by means of Government grants.

Besides these research stations, which are national in their scope, there is, in this country, a local investigation and advisory organisation on a provincial basis, stationed at educational centres. At each of these centres there is a specialist investigational and advisory staff of officers in the main branches of agricultural science—viz., in chemistry, dairy bacteriology,

economics, entomology, mycology and veterinary science. This specialist advisory service is not Government controlled but is financed almost entirely by Government grants. The service also serves as a link between the research institutes and the county advisory services, consisting of the county agricultural organisers and their staffs ; this latter organisation is more fully described in the chapter on agricultural education.

The Government Department primarily responsible for the administration of agricultural research is, in England and Wales, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and, in Scotland, the Department of Agriculture for Scotland. Considerable development in the work took place as a result of the additional financial provision (called the Development Fund) provided for agricultural research by the Development and Road Improvement (Funds) Act, 1909. More recently, the administration of agricultural research has been strengthened by the formation in 1931 under the Privy Council of the Agricultural Research Council. Although this last body can itself carry out research, its main function is to act in an advisory capacity to Government Departments in Great Britain so far as agricultural research is concerned.



No. 13

Black-faced sheep in Glen Lyon, Perthshire, Scotland.

(Photograph supplied by the Travel and Industrial Development Association of Great Britain and Ireland.)

II. EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS

A. ENGLAND AND WALES

Since the success of any system of vocational training depends upon the quality of the general education which precedes it, it seems desirable, before giving an account of technical agriculture instruction in Great Britain, to refer to recent developments in the general educational system in rural areas.

1. Recent changes in the countryside have profoundly influenced education in rural areas. While motor services and wireless, electricity and mechanisation and local changes in methods of farming have broken down isolation, created new problems and brought new facilities which materially affect village life and work, school reorganisation has also progressed. In many areas, the older children from small and isolated schools are conveyed to well-equipped senior schools where the instruction is better and where there is more opportunity for achievement and creative activity.

2. The area school, built on a site easy of access from the village it serves, is the most successful expression of this reorganisation. In many such schools, the experimental stage has been passed and the proportion of children reaching a good standard in reading, writing and arithmetic is considerably higher than is usual in village schools with a full age-range. To this noteworthy gain must be added wider training in other subjects, and practical instruction.

3. Practical activities are not planned with the idea of anchoring the children to the countryside in after life. That education should determine, instead of reveal, a child's future is not only a dangerous theory, but it also restricts variety of educational provision and limits the development of individual aptitude. The reason why rural education is influenced by environment is primarily that children are interested in the processes going on around them, and these processes in the countryside are not only fundamental to civilisation, but are also the basis of much of value in the cultural life of the community.

4. Generally speaking, good training for both boys and girls is provided by these activities. Poultry-keeping, bee-keeping and dairying, which lend themselves to a division of labour between the sexes, are often so successful for that reason, although they have also been successfully carried out in some

girls' departments. Housecraft and needlework require more time than handicraft and consequently in some schools, where the boys and girls should work together, it is necessary to restrict gardening to the boys. Where possible, however, it is proving profitable from the educational point of view to develop craft projects in which boys and girls co-operate.

5. *Gardening*: The striking development in school gardening offers the children training in flower, fruit and vegetable culture and enables them to enjoy many of the pleasures arising from the possession of a beautiful garden as well as the sense of accomplishment due to successful results. The instruction comprises training in tillage, rotational system for vegetables, cultivation of flowers, propagation, training and care of fruit trees and bushes and, in some cases, the use of hot-beds, cold frames and even a greenhouse. In some schools, particular attention is given to specialised branches of gardening. In one school, emphasis is laid on seed raising and testing, in keeping with the local industry, which absorbs 60% of the boys as they leave school. Several schools in a fruit-growing county are developing courses of instruction in fruit culture, which includes every stage on the production of well-grown apples, plums, red and black currants, gooseberries, raspberries and strawberries. Stool beds for apple and plum stocks have been established in order to make the gardens self-supporting as regards young material; stock influence on varieties of apples and pruning methods on trees, bushes and strawberry plants are under observation; and different forms of training fruit-trees are being illustrated. In many schools, the garden is regarded as part of the school and is fully drawn on in connection with science, art and other subjects.

6. *Handicraft*: In most country areas, a large number of boys—and, in some cases, a few girls—receive regular instruction in handicraft, of which, as a complement to a broad course of practical education, there is growing appreciation. It is recognised that the fundamental processes are the same, and that training in tool-handling is needed whether the final result is a garden frame or high-class cabinet. The later stages of the course are influenced by the demands of the garden, live-stock, science room, local industries and so on, and the teachers combine loyalty to their craft with service to the school course as a whole. In addition, the construction of simple machines, electrical and mechanical, from improvised materials is successfully undertaken; for example, several schools have lathes and potter's wheels made from bicycle wheels and parts of sewing machines. Individual needs of pupils who begin some project at home are also supplied. Teachers with initiative make use of less traditional material. During the last five years, one elementary school terraced a

garden on a steep slope with concrete and stone. Each of the three terraces is supported by a retaining wall of large stones on a concrete foundation, and the paths are neatly edged by concrete curbs. An admirable garden house of brick has also been built. The work is solid and well finished. An undertaking of unusual magnitude was successfully carried out by a small school in the north of England. A cement-lined swimming bath was, except for the final facing, constructed entirely by the school, a double-fronted pavilion with a verandah was almost completely home-made, and the levelling of two tennis courts was also undertaken by the children. Work of this kind not only provides experience of a very practical nature for the children, but it also increases the social amenities of the village concerned and makes the school what it should be, an active centre of interest to others besides the teachers and the children.

7. *The care of live-stock* is fruitful from an educational point of view and several schools find that it pays financially. The difficulty of caring for the stock during week-ends and vacations is not insuperable. At its best, the work is an admirable exercise in applied biology, hygiene and business. The children get an idea of business methods by experience, and they are taught the use of experiments to increase yield and quality.

8. *Housecraft* : All local authorities make some provision for the teaching of housecraft in rural areas. Actual conditions as regards water and food supply, sanitation and equipment have of late received more attention and, in the cookery course, additional stress is laid on different methods of using country produce. The preservation of meat, fruit, vegetables, herbs and eggs forms an important section of the work. Simple lessons in the use of electrical appliances for the home are also increasing.

9. *Needlecraft* : The needlework taught in the country, as in the town, aims at developing powers of construction providing a training in craftsmanship and guiding taste and judgment.

10. *Dairying* has been notably extended during the past few years among the older children in elementary schools, particularly in the south of England.

The instruction, which is in the hands of well-qualified members of the agricultural staffs, varies considerably in different counties. Thus, in one, it is closely associated throughout with practical work at the farm and in a room temporarily equipped as a dairy, where the children have ample opportunities to handle appliances and to take part in various operations. In another, instruction is given in the class-room and illustrated by suitable experiments and by farm visits. In a third, the

teaching is confined mainly to butter-making and, in consequence, is narrower and more vocational in character.

11. *Art and varied crafts*: A remarkable advance has also been made in the provision of varied craft work, which may be divided into three groups: book crafts, textile crafts and plastic crafts.

Children co-operate in writing and illustrating a book, designing marbled end-papers and making patterns for the decoration of the covers. The children engage in block-cutting, usually from linoleum, printing, lettering, and illuminating, stencilling, leather tooling and embossing, and, in at least one case, etching. The bookbinding, which is generally carried out by the older children, is often developed to processes practised by skilled artisans. A few schools have set up printing presses and produce their own school magazines.

Work in textile crafts is extending rapidly. Its popularity is due primarily to the wide choice of possible materials, many of which are bought at negligible cost or are obtained by unravelling used fabrics. Teachers have been quick to realise the variety of the exercises offered by textile crafts and their value in hand and eye training. Simple work with cane and raffia may be seen in practically every rural school and is usually regarded as the first step. Some schools become proficient in the making of mats and baskets; some weave seats for chairs and stools with split cane, rushes or sea grass; some use simple looms to weave braids, neckties, scarves and similar articles. More advanced work produces lengths of patterned cloths.

Modelling, which begins with the use of plasticine in the infants' class, sometimes develops into the making, glazing and firing of pots in clay. A few schools have kilns for the finishing process. In one school, a course, graded for children from 7 to 14 years of age, has for its climax the reproduction of traditional shapes: Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Early British. The products of another school are domestic pots and pans and simple fancy ware. A third school purchases "biscuit" from a manufacturer and, having decorated it, returns it to the pottery for firing.

12. Finally, reference should be made to the greatly increased attention given in recent years to the health of the school-child. Steady progress has been made in improving country schools generally, and particularly as regards lighting, ventilation, heating and the division of large rooms occupied by more than one class.

The progress made in solving the problem of arrangements for children who live too far away to return home at midday is striking, and reflects the greatest credit on the teachers, to whose initiative and active co-operation the success is largely

MAH SINGH COOLIDGE

due. Usually, tablecloths, crockery and cutlery are provided; the tables are properly laid and, in many cases, are decorated attractively with flowers from the school garden; and the children are taught to sit down quietly and to eat their meal in comfortable conditions. For those who bring sandwiches from home, cocoa or hot milk is available at a small cost, usually about a half-penny per day; where there is a demand, hot meals are supplied. When the numbers are small, the midday meal may be prepared by the cookery class: where they are large, special accommodation and paid help are provided. In this way a well-prepared and substantial meal is produced at a small cost, averaging from $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ to $3d.$ for two courses.

The new senior schools usually have spacious playgrounds and playing-fields; and many of the adapted and extended schools have similar provision or access to playing-fields within reasonable reach.

B. SCOTLAND

The statement regarding educational activities in rural areas in England is, in general, applicable to Scotland. There are, however, certain features of rural life which are perhaps peculiar to Scotland and which may be worthy of mention.

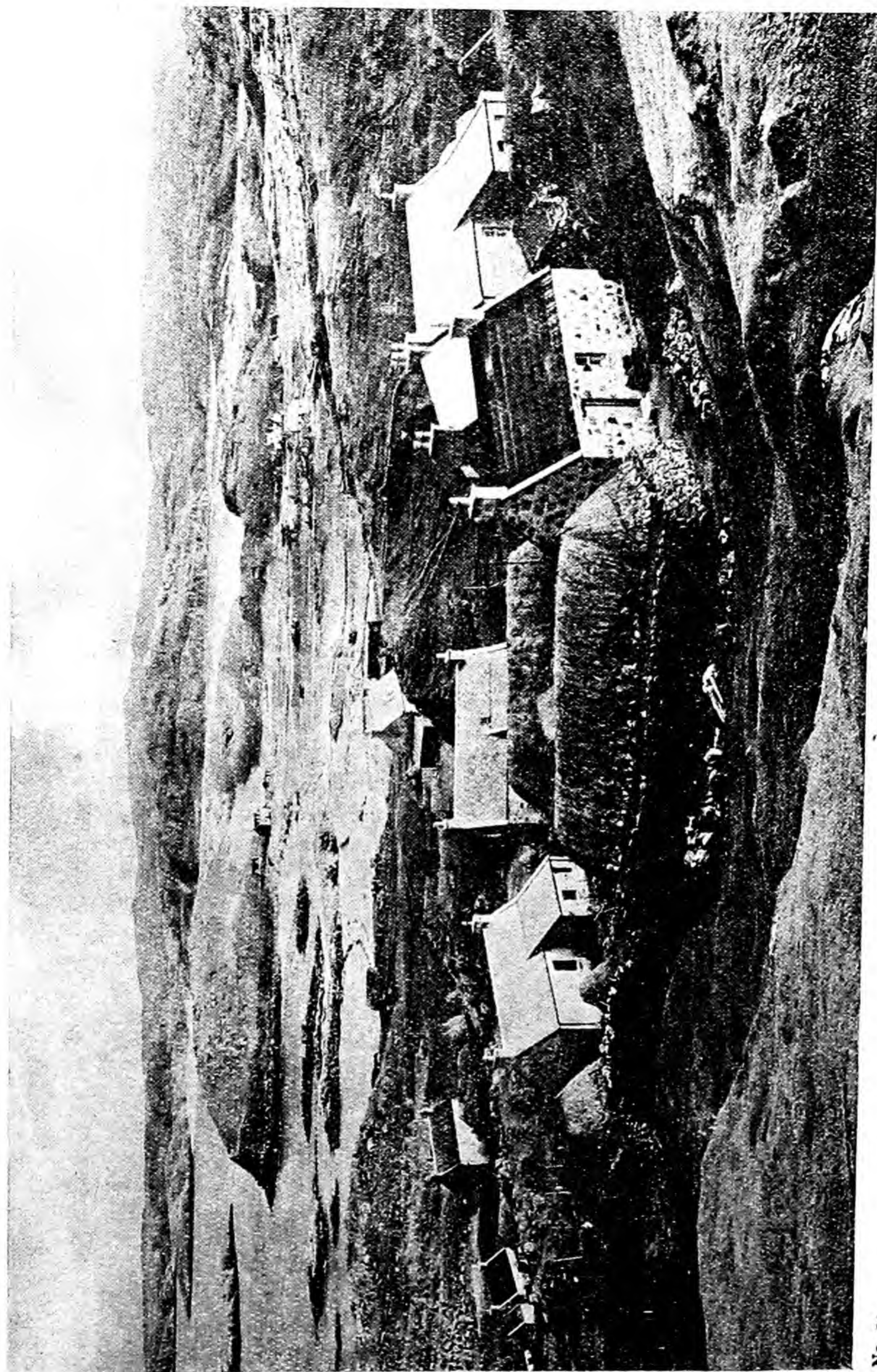
In the year 1935, there were, in Scotland, 751 one-teacher schools, mainly in crofting settlements and in sheep-farming country; 630 two-teacher schools, mainly in arable districts; and 337 three-teacher schools in villages. These educated 70,040 children, roughly one-twelfth of the school population of Scotland. Under the older tradition, a few selected pupils from such schools proceeded to a central secondary school with a view chiefly to education for professional occupations. In recent years, there has been a much more extensive movement towards centralisation which, while withholding no facility from the boy or girl of academic bent, permitted of the development of specialised rural education. The recent raising of the school-leaving age will give impetus to the movement. The curricula of these centres differ in scope, being designed to meet the needs either of pupils who are likely to find employment on the land, or of those who wish to take a university course in agriculture or an allied science.

In several areas in Scotland, centralisation is, for geographical reasons, scarcely practicable, and, in consequence, many of the smaller schools remain self-contained units. Nevertheless, these small schools provide a sound preparation for life in the country. The teachers, from the very circumstances of their lives, are in close touch with rural life and industry; they may also have taken special rural courses at the training colleges,

either as part of their early training or later in vacation classes. There are often school gardens for various forms of practical post-primary work, some of which have roused keen interest in the pupils and have been of all-round educational value. In one noteworthy instance, where a mining community was rehoused, it was evident that the creation of amenities in the new district had been inspired by the teaching of horticulture in the local school. Frequently, the instruction in the smaller schools is supplemented by visits from specialist peripatetic teachers, or, in certain circumstances, the pupils are centralised for practical subjects only.

In the Highlands and Islands, traditional arts and industries are fostered and in many of the schools in these areas the teaching of the native language (Gaelic) has due place in the curriculum.

In rural evening continuation classes, the choice of subjects has in the main been similar to that offered in urban areas, but, in one centre, approximately a hundred students follow a comprehensive five-year course leading to the award of the higher diplomas in horticulture and agriculture. Modified courses on similar lines are to be found in a few other centres.



Valtos : A Lewis township on the shores of Loch Roag ;
improved buildings erected by assistance from Government funds.

(Photo by Robert M. ADAM, Edinburgh.)

III. AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

A. ENGLAND AND WALES

By the means described in the preceding chapter, it is hoped, not only to develop the mind of the country child in a general cultural sense—a pre-requisite for all sound later learning—but definitely to lead, without actual vocational training, the mind towards learning in agriculture if it is so inclined.

Agricultural education in England and Wales may be broadly divided into higher and intermediate, the former being carried out by agricultural colleges and university departments of agriculture, the latter, for the most part, by county councils. The councils are locally elected bodies, and, in most of their activities, including agricultural education, have a considerable measure of autonomy.

For the purpose of providing instruction in agriculture, the county councils employ staffs consisting of one or more instructors in some, or most, of the various branches of agriculture. These instructors (there are some 470 of them) are at once teachers and advisers. They give courses of instruction to young people who are already engaged, or about to be engaged, in agricultural pursuits, and they are able to advise farmers and others on the day-to-day problems which confront them. They also assist in the teaching of horticulture, dairying and poultry-keeping in the elementary schools. In most counties, the staff works under the supervision of a county agricultural organiser, who is responsible for the whole of the agricultural educational and advisory work conducted in the county.

The extent of the facilities provided varies considerably from county to county, but no county attempts to meet, within its own area, all the agricultural educational needs of its residents. There is co-operation between county and county, and between the county authorities and the other authorities which provide agricultural education and advice.

Vocational training proper begins at the age of 16, but, in some counties, continuation classes in agriculture are provided for students between the ages of 14 and 16. These classes usually extend over two years, the first year being devoted to instruction in general science and the second in subjects more directly applicable to agriculture.

In the majority of counties, however, such classes are not provided, but, by other means, the attempt is made to attract young people to the prospects of a rural life. The most popular

of these schemes is a voluntary organisation—the Young Farmers' Clubs movement—to which reference is made in the chapter on "Rural Organisations".

Vocational training proper begins at the age of 16 and is given either by means of non-residential courses or at residential institutions.

In all counties which undertake to provide agricultural instruction, courses of day or evening classes are conducted at various centres by the agricultural educational staffs. Classes are held in such subjects as veterinary science, farriery, agricultural machinery, horticulture and poultry-keeping. There were 388 organised day courses in 1936/37 attended by 5,392 students and 499 evening classes with 11,796 students. Instruction in manual processes, such as ploughing, hedge-laying, ditching, etc., is also provided and 2,676 students attended such courses in 1936/37.

All these courses may serve either as an alternative or as a preliminary to the more systematic instruction which can be given only at residential institutions.

The student who has left the elementary school at 14 and who wishes to obtain in the shortest possible time some fundamental technical training in agriculture will normally proceed to a residential centre round about the age of 16, which is the minimum age for admission. This centre will, in most cases, be a county farm institute, situated in his own county or in a neighbouring county. In some areas, however, there is no convenient county institute, and its place is filled by an independently governed institution for higher agricultural education, which undertakes to provide, in addition to its normal work, courses on the farm institute level. Most county councils in England and Wales offer scholarships tenable at these and similar institutions; 1,278 scholarships were awarded by county councils in 1936/37 at a cost of £30,658. These local schemes are supplemented by a scholarship scheme which is administered directly by the Ministry of Agriculture and is described below.

There are seventeen county farm institutes in England and Wales. They are owned by the county councils and provide courses varying in length from a few weeks to a year, although there is one centre that provides a two-year course. In 1936/37, the total number of students in residence at county farm institutes was 1,520.

The institute is essentially a residential teaching centre situated on a farm which provides facilities for practical instruction. Farm institutes vary considerably in size, but, on the average, they can accommodate about forty students and possess farms of some 250 to 350 acres. They serve as the headquarters of the county agricultural education staffs and as the pivot round which the various agricultural educational and advisory activities

of the county revolve. The county agricultural organiser is normally the principal of the institute.

The institutes cater for the educational needs of students who propose to become small-scale farmers, farm managers and the like. The great majority of students come from the land and will return to the land without any further vocational training, and their object in attending is to secure in the shortest possible time some fundamental technical instruction that will put them into touch with modern methods in farming. At all farm institutes, special attention is given to practical instruction; in many cases, at least half the time is spent on the institute farm, which may possess, in addition to the farm area proper, special sections set aside for horticulture, dairying and poultry-keeping.

In their advisory and educational work, the county staffs attempt to demonstrate, as far as the means at their disposal allow, the value of approved farming methods. They have also to keep the county farmers in touch with the latest scientific developments and they can do this best by showing how far the discoveries of research are applicable to local conditions. They have therefore to do some demonstrational and experimental work.

In counties with farm institutes a considerable acreage on the institute farm is set aside for experimental purposes. Here variety and manurial trials for cereals and root-crops can be conducted, and also experiments in the improvement of grassland and the feeding and management of live-stock. Some counties which do not possess farm institutes have established experimental farms for this purpose. In the other counties, the experimental programme must be confined to field experiments and demonstrations conducted on scattered plots throughout the county; in counties with central farms, these local activities are subsidiary to the main experimental work. They are conducted on the farmers' own holdings and so bring home very vividly to them and to their neighbours the lessons of research.

The work which is done in this way serves as the basis of the definite recommendations which the county staffs make in the course of their advisory visits. The value of specialised advice is appreciated by farmers, poultry-keepers, market gardeners, etc., and some 200,000 requests for advice are dealt with every year by the county staffs.

As has already been mentioned, there is, in addition to co-operation between county and county, co-operation between the counties and the non-county authorities that provide higher agricultural education. These authorities are the governing bodies of agricultural colleges and university departments of agriculture. They are autonomous institutions, the primary function of which is to provide the advanced residential

instruction which is suitable for those who intend to become large-scale farmers, teachers, experts and officials. In this, they work in close co-operation with the county councils. In order to make this co-operation more effective, the country has been divided into "provinces", each consisting of a group of counties centred round an agricultural college or university department of agriculture, which serves as the link between them. In every province, there is at least one centre providing residential instruction of the farm-institute type and at least one institution for higher agricultural education. Where there are no county farm institutes in the area, the collegiate centre undertakes both functions. The county authorities in the province make annual contributions to the provincial educational centre, and, in return, the latter normally reserves a specified number of places for students from the contributing counties on special terms.

The provincial educational centre is normally the headquarters of the staff of specialists in the various branches of agricultural science which serves in each province as a link between the central research stations and the county advisory services (the status and function of the provincial advisory officers is described in the chapter on "Agricultural Research"). This system has obvious advantages. It provides a valuable link between class-room teaching and research, and, at the same time, it secures close collaboration between the advisory officers and the instructors in the counties. The county organiser receives from time to time requests for advice which can only be dealt with by a specialist in one of the many sciences underlying agricultural practice. These are referred to the specialist advisory officer, who, if the means are at his disposal, may carry out, either on the farm attached to the provincial centre or on the farmer's own farm, the specific investigation designed to furnish the solution to the problem. This course is usually possible where research work has already been carried out on the subject at a research institute or elsewhere, and it is a question of seeing how far this work is applicable in the locality. There are, however, problems which are entirely beyond the means at the disposal of the advisory officer and which can only be dealt with adequately at a research institute (the functions of a research institute are discussed on the chapter on "Agricultural Research").

There are six agricultural colleges and eight university departments of agriculture in England and Wales which provide advanced instruction in agriculture. Most of these institutions serve as the provincial educational and advisory centres. Broadly speaking, the colleges concentrate on the training of those who intend to become practical farmers, managers, land agents, etc., while university departments are primarily concerned with the education of future scientific investigators and teachers.

Students are normally admitted to agricultural colleges and university departments between the ages of 16 and 18, and are expected to have had a sound general education and, in many cases, previous practical experience of farming is insisted upon; university students must have matriculated. Women as well as men attend most of these centres, while two colleges are reserved for women only. University courses extend over three or four years and lead to degrees or diplomas, and college courses last for from two to four years in preparation for college or national certificates and diplomas.

Farms running, in general, from 320 to 550 acres are attached to these centres; their scope and function is similar to that of the institute farms described above.

In addition to the main college courses, shorter courses are also held at certain times of the year at some of these centres. At one college, for example, a six-week course in dairying and poultry management is held during the summer vacation, while at another provision is made for a two- to three-week course in agricultural engineering in the summer term, and special instruction is given from time to time over one or more days in milk-testing, poultry-trussing, butter-making and cheese-making. Moreover, as explained above, some agricultural colleges which serve as centres for groups of counties where there are no farm institutes also provide farm-institute courses of up to a year in length.

The number of students taking the different courses provided was 2,112 in 1936/37.

In considering the national system of agricultural education which has been outlined above, it is necessary to bear in mind the fact that it is the result not so much of deliberate central planning as of spontaneous local growth. In accordance with the English tradition, the State is concerned mainly to stimulate and co-ordinate. As far as practicable, the bodies actually responsible for carrying out the work—university departments, agricultural colleges and local authorities—are given discretion in the spending of funds provided by the Ministry of Agriculture. Sixty per cent of the expenditure by local authorities on agricultural education is paid by the Ministry, while agricultural colleges and university departments receive an annual "block" grant which is assessed over a period of years. The amount paid in 1936/37 was £225,345 to local authorities and £51,000 to agricultural colleges and university departments. The Ministry is charged with the duty of seeing that this money is expended to the best advantage, and by securing the co-operation of the various authorities concerned this end has been achieved and a national system has been built up which is elastic in character and capable of being adapted and extended to meet the needs of all sections of the industry.

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In addition to its general supervision of these activities, the Ministry of Agriculture has, since 1922, administered directly a scheme for the award of scholarships to assist the sons and daughters of agricultural workers or other rural workers in similar circumstances to avail themselves of the facilities for education in agriculture. Under this scheme, all class fees, etc., of the scholars are paid and allowances are made in respect of their maintenance and travelling expenses. All applicants must declare their intention to take up agricultural or allied pursuits after training. The scheme provides for three types of scholarships—(a) junior scholarships for courses of from one to four terms in length at farm institutes and similar centres, (b) extended junior awards reserved for students who have already held junior scholarships and who have shown that they are capable of benefiting from a more advanced or specialised course of study, (c) senior scholarships awarded for a degree or diploma course in agriculture or an allied subject (including veterinary science). Since the inception of the scheme, assistance has been granted to more than 1,700 individuals, involving the award of 2,021 scholarships.

A similar scheme confined to residents in Scotland is administered by the Department of Agriculture for Scotland. The scheme provides for four types of scholarships tenable at (a) short courses for farmers at the agricultural colleges lasting for from four to ten weeks, (b) college certificate courses extending over twenty weeks, (c) courses lasting approximately two years for diplomas awarded by the colleges in agriculture, dairying, horticulture or poultry-keeping, and (d) courses of training for from three to five years leading up to the award of a degree in agriculture (B.Sc.) or a diploma of veterinary science (M.R.C.V.S.). Since the inception of the scheme, 416 awards have been made at a cost to the State of over £50,000.

B. SCOTLAND

For the purpose of agricultural education, Scotland is divided into three areas reflecting a natural division which marks the north-eastern province as predominantly a stock-rearing area, the south-eastern as a crop-producing area and the south-western as a dairying area. The policy of the authorities concerned with agricultural education in Scotland was directed towards the development in each of these areas, in conjunction with county councils and other interested bodies, of an institution equipped to provide a full course of instruction in agricultural science, and also to carry into the different counties comprised in the areas agricultural instruction of a more elementary nature. In pursuance of this policy, agricultural colleges were established

as follows : the West of Scotland Agricultural College, Glasgow, founded in 1899 ; the Edinburgh and East of Scotland College of Agriculture, founded in 1901 ; the North of Scotland College of Agriculture, Aberdeen, founded in 1904.

The activities of each college are directed by a Board of Governors representative of public bodies within the area of the college and elsewhere—*i.e.*, town and county councils, the university, the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, the National Farmers' Union of Scotland, the Scottish Farm Servants' Union, the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes, and the Department of Agriculture for Scotland. The income of the colleges is derived from students' fees ; earnings of certain branches of the colleges—*e.g.*, farms, poultry, dairying, horticulture and bee-keeping departments ; contributions from town and county councils ; and State grants payable through the Department of Agriculture for Scotland and the Scottish Education Department. Grants have also been made from time to time for specific purposes at the colleges by the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland and the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust.

The work of the colleges falls into two categories :

(1) *Central Classes*.—Courses of instruction are provided leading up to a university degree in agricultural science, or to a college diploma in agriculture, dairying, poultry-keeping or horticulture. Attached to each college is a farm which is used for demonstrations and experimental work and a garden for practical instruction in horticulture. The West of Scotland College is provided with a well-equipped dairy school and a poultry school, which are utilised for training teachers in dairying and poultry-keeping. Residential courses for girls (extending over a period of about six months) are available at the Craibstone School of Rural Domestic Economy established by the North of Scotland College of Agriculture. The object of these courses is to provide for girls special training in the various duties undertaken by women in country districts. The subjects of instruction are dairy farming, poultry-keeping, management of pigs, household management, gardening and bee-keeping. Courses of a similar nature are provided on a smaller scale by the West of Scotland College. Evening classes in a number of agricultural subjects are also provided by the three colleges for the benefit of agricultural and other workers who are unable to attend classes during the day.

The total number of students in attendance at the central classes and courses held by the colleges during the year 1936/37 was 905.

(2) *Extension Work*.—The facilities for agricultural education provided by the central classes of the college can be taken

advantage of by a small proportion only of the agricultural community. To meet the needs of the others, each college employs a staff of instructors in agriculture, horticulture, dairying, poultry-keeping and bee-keeping, whose duties consist in providing instruction and advice to rural workers at centres near their homes. Each county has a small staff of instructors allocated to it, who give courses of instructions at convenient centres in the county, visit and give advice to farmers and small-holders, conduct demonstrations on farms to illustrate the suitability of different varieties of crops, methods of manuring, feeding of stock, management of pastures, etc. The instructors also assist in the teaching of horticulture in rural schools and in teaching agricultural subjects in continuation classes promoted by the county education authorities. A special staff of instructors and instructresses is also employed by the Edinburgh and Glasgow Colleges to give practical instruction in horticulture and poultry-keeping to unemployed plot-holders and small-holders. The following table gives particulars of work done by members of the county staffs of the colleges during the academic year 1936/37 :

	Edinburgh and East of Scotland College of Agriculture	West of Scotland Agricultural College	North of Scotland College of Agriculture
Systematic courses :			
Number of meetings . .	1,146	1,102	538
Number of attendances	17,157	28,747 *	17,367
Lectures and demonstra- tions :			
Number of meetings . .	234	694	1,123
Number of attendances	8,875	26,705 *	28,455
Visits to farms and crofts . .	7,302	18,816	14,654

* Student hours.

Special problems arising out of, for example, outbreaks of plant diseases and insect or fungal attacks on crops are referred by the county instructors for advice to the specialist staff at the central institutions. Each college maintains a small staff of advisory officers, whose duties are to carry out investigations into particular local problems and to advise farmers and others through the county instructors on such matters. Reference is made in the chapter on "Rural Organisations" to the part played by the Scottish Young Farmers' Clubs movement in the education of youth in agricultural matters.

IV. RURAL ORGANISATIONS

A. ENGLAND AND WALES

In addition to its activities in the field of agricultural education and research, the Ministry of Agriculture holds itself responsible for the supervision of a large body of voluntary activities which have important bearings on the social life of the countryside.

In this field, the outstanding items at the present time may, for convenience, be grouped under the headings of the work of the rural community councils, the women's institutes, rural industries and young farmers' clubs. It will be useful in this summary to take the work of the rural community councils and the subject of rural industries together.

Rural community councils exist in a majority of counties in England and Wales and are representative of the chief voluntary bodies in the county, and are voluntary themselves. They function in regard to such matters as the development of rural industries, the construction and maintenance of village halls, the extension of music and drama in country districts, the provision of playing-fields, and in assisting the removal or amelioration of unemployment.

As regards rural industries, there is much to be done in helping the old country crafts which are subsidiary to agriculture—*e.g.*, blacksmithery, carpentry, saddlery—and in the establishment of new industries. The Government recognises this fact and accordingly makes grants to each council to meet a proportion of its expenses. These expenses include the appointment of a rural industries organiser, whose business it is to keep in close touch with the country craftsmen and their work in the county. Without such assistance, experience has shown that there is danger of a useful craft's disappearing entirely from a locality. An instance of this is the blacksmith, who, without such assistance as instruction in new and up-to-date processes—*e.g.*, acetylene welding—or in finding new markets for wrought-iron work (gates, door and grate furniture, etc.), would be liable to disappear from the countryside, as the older members of the craft die out. In this work, the councils are guided by the Rural Industries Bureau. This body is maintained by the Government for the sole purpose of assisting and directing the work all over the country in the development of rural industries. Whether, therefore, there is a rural community council in a county or not, the Bureau's technical advisers are available to give advice and instruction in all matters pertaining to rural industries.

The rural community council work in relation to village halls is guided by the National Council of Social Service, and is supported by grants and loans from State funds. These grants and loans are paid direct from the State Department and the national council, but the local rural community councils assist in bringing village-hall schemes into a proper state for submission for financial assistance. An invariable condition of the latter is that the village itself must contribute a reasonable proportion of the cost and must guarantee the maintenance of the halls for the future. Under this scheme, many village halls are being built. The halls are evidently being found more and more useful in helping to meet the demand in village communities for greater social activity. To-day, there are wireless groups, physical-culture classes, dramatic and musical societies, and a demand for lecture services, dances and whist drives. All can be accommodated in the village hall, which, with proper management, becomes an up-to-date centre of village social life.

The other body chiefly concerned in improving rural amenities is the National Federation of Women's Institutes. The Federation is a central organisation controlling some 5,400 institutes, a large number of which are in villages. Where these have no meeting place of their own, they would no doubt in most cases use the village hall. Women of all ranks and classes in the country districts take part in village welfare work under the ægis of these institutes. Among the ordinary activities of an institute are numbered the encouragement of the lighter village crafts such as lace-making, needlework, leather-work and similar household occupations. The members of institutes also take part in shows of agricultural produce, jams, preserves, honey and flowers and organise exhibitions of their craft work. The Ministry makes a small grant per annum to the National Federation, to assist it in the cost of training teachers in handicraft work.

In the note on "Agricultural Education" in England and Wales, reference was made to the Young Farmers' Club movement. This has grown in a comparatively short time from small local beginnings into a countrywide movement with a membership of over 9,000. The object of the clubs is to get together young people in rural districts, form them into groups and instil into them a knowledge and love of the countryside and to help them by means of the various activities of the clubs to become useful members of society with a wide and intelligent interest in all aspects of the life of the community to which they belong.

The clubs are organised into a central federation—the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs. The Federation is supported, *inter alia*, by grants from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Carnegie Trust and from a considerable number of county

councils. In some cases, county federations have been formed and these have been aided by grants from county councils.

The activities of the clubs include the care of animals, particularly farm stock, the undertaking of some small agricultural enterprise such as the rearing of calves, pigs or poultry, the cultivation of a small plot, the keeping of accounts, co-operation in buying and selling and the general conduct of club affairs.

The clubs help to bridge the gap between the school-leaving age and the age at which vocational training begins, and thus to prevent the danger of any educational slip-back, both in those whose education is to be continued at a later stage and also for those whose education would otherwise cease after leaving school.

The clubs offer to the county agricultural education staffs a ready medium for classes and lectures in connection with county schemes for agricultural education. In many counties, members of the agricultural education staffs attend club meetings in the capacity of adviser or lecturer.

Apart, however, from the vocational or agricultural aspect, the clubs have a very definite general educational, cultural and social value. They are the means of bringing together young people when at a somewhat difficult age, and provide an opportunity for continuing their education in an unusually attractive form. It has been found in practice that, through membership of the clubs, young people have become interested in and avail themselves of the educational facilities provided by local authorities.

An account of rural amenities in England and Wales would not be complete without a reference to the public library services in rural areas. In the more populous of the rural centres, such as the market towns, branches of the county public library have been established, and these afford exactly the same facilities as the urban library—a considerable selection of books from which to choose, open access to the shelves of the lending library and facilities for consulting reference books. The dweller in the village is generally served from a centre, usually the local public elementary school or the women's institute, which is open for library purposes on one afternoon a week. A representative, but necessarily somewhat limited, selection of books is sent down in travelling cases from the headquarters of the county library, and this selection is changed at intervals of two or three weeks, being replaced by a completely new set. If a rural borrower wants a specific book which is not in the local set, he mentions his requirement to the librarian, generally a voluntary worker, who, if the book exists in the county library, will get it for him as soon as it is available. If the book is not in the county library, the county librarian puts into operation the regional system, under which any book in any one of the nine

library regions into which England and Wales are divided is available for the use of any borrower in the same region. If the book is not available in any regional library, the county librarian applies to the National Central Library, where every effort is made to supply it, either from its own shelves, by borrowing from another region or an outlier library (*i.e.*, a university library, commercial library or other library not being a public library which has affiliated itself to the regional scheme), or, in the last resort, and if the merits of the application justify it, by direct purchase. The effect of this system is that, while there is no need for local libraries to incur expenditure and take up shelf-room with books which are in infrequent demand, the whole of the public library resources of the country are at the disposal of an individual borrower, no matter in how remote a place he may live.

B. SCOTLAND

There are, in Scotland, three unofficial organisations of national scope whose general aim, from different angles, is the betterment of the condition of rural workers. They are the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes, Highland Home Industries, and the Scottish Country Industries Development Trust. These bodies owe their origin and their continued activity largely to the spontaneous action of groups of persons interested in the countryside and its inhabitants, who saw with regret the lag in social development in the country as compared with the towns and the threatened submersion of old-established country handicrafts by cheap factory production.

The need for action of a social kind, which gained expression under war conditions in 1917 in the formation of the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes, has resulted in an organisation under this name so widespread that now almost every rural parish has its institute. These institutes are centres of social and educational intercourse for countrywomen. The subjects studied make a varied and comprehensive list and include domestic science and economy, flower and vegetable cultivation and home and local industries. Special "guilds" exist within the general framework of the organisation designed to raise the standard of housewifery and of handicrafts. The institutes do not function in isolation, but endeavour to co-ordinate the results of local effort and to take their share in local community work, affording assistance to such schemes as the local nursing associations and hospitals, and fostering, with a considerable measure of success, objects so different as first-aid and co-operative marketing, child welfare and musical and dramatic production. Perhaps the outstanding feature of the work of the institutes is the way in which women of different social standing are brought together

in the pursuit of a common object. The organisation is now in the main self-supporting, but received from the Department of Agriculture grants in aid of certain specific objects, such as the expenses of organisation in remote, sparsely populated regions.

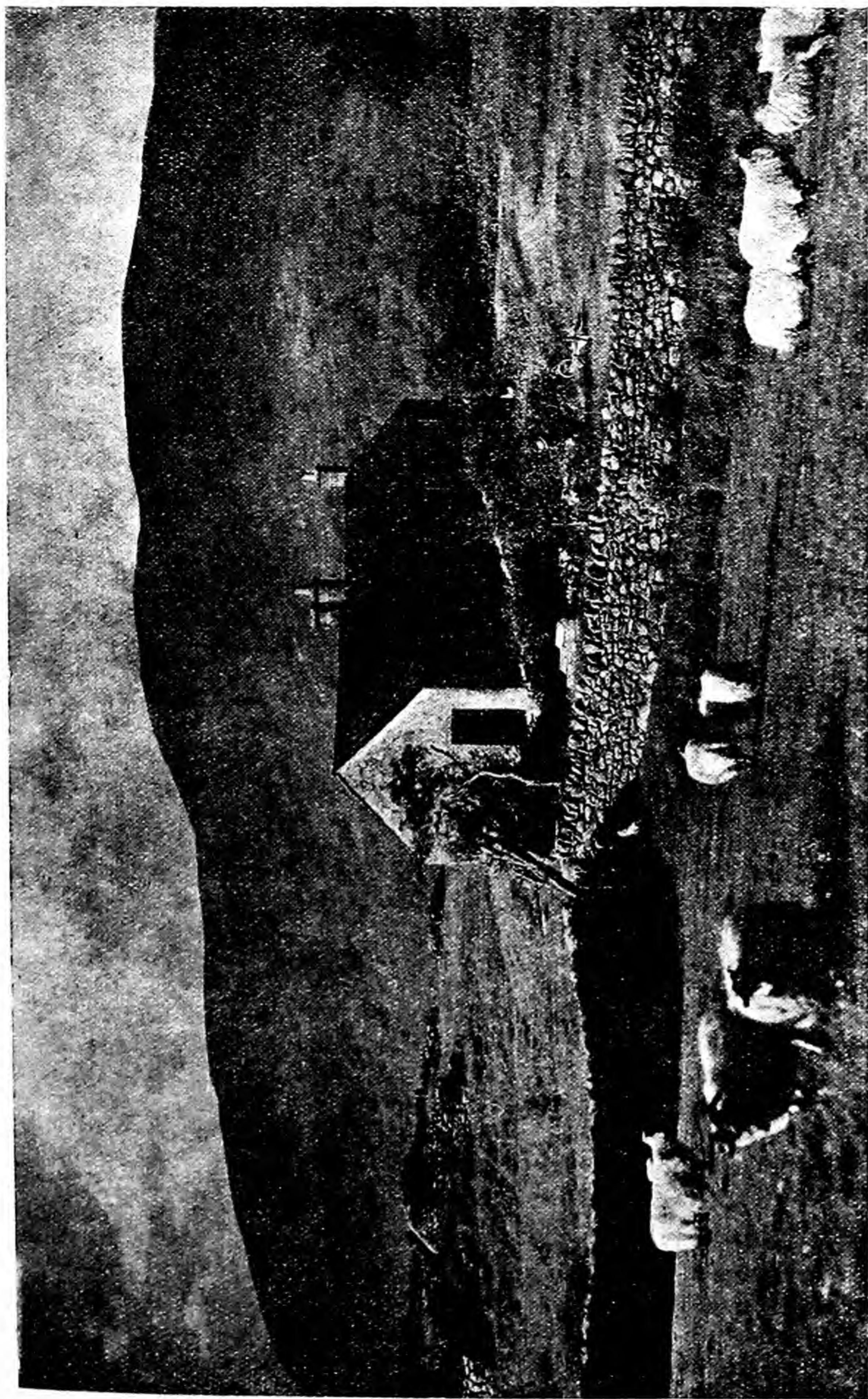
Highland Home Industries, Ltd., is an organisation designed to deal with the products of rural industries in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, where crofters, small-holders and fishermen form the bulk of the population, and the conditions of life are such that a supplementary occupation is almost, if not quite, a necessity. The characteristic product is Harris tweed, manufactured in the Outer Isles. The traditional trade is in a hand-spun and hand-woven fabric worked by the crofters' families in their homes and coloured with natural vegetable dyes. This industry forms a useful supplement to the rather meagre living which they derive from crofting and fishing. The practical difficulty, for geographical and other reasons, has always been the disposal of these products, and this has been intensified in recent years, owing to competition in the shape of machine methods of production, which result in a useful product of moderate price but lacking some of the qualities of the entirely home-made article. Highland Home Industries was set up about twenty-five years ago to act as an agency for the sale of tweed and other products of home industries. This association has been successful in finding markets which would otherwise be inaccessible to the workers or accessible only at a cost prohibitive to them. The organisation is, in form, a trading company, but its basis is philanthropic—that is to say, its principle is to keep its running costs as low as possible consistently with efficiency and to return to the producers as large a proportion as possible of the proceeds of sale, retaining no profit. The company is not in receipt of regular assistance from public funds.

Quite recently, in 1936, a trust has been formed under the ægis of Highland Home Industries to assume the function of fostering rural crafts and industries generally throughout Scotland by giving craftsmen expert technical advice in making their products and by assisting them to sell such products. The trust is known as the Scottish Country Industries Development Trust, and its broad object, as its name implies, is to encourage existing rural industries and, where possible, to revive others. Its procedure is to examine area by area the conditions which local craftsmen, such as blacksmiths, saddlers, shoemakers, woodworkers and the like, are experiencing as the result of the economic tendency towards the use of mass-produced products and away from the hand-worked article. From amongst these workers, the trust makes a selection of those who seem likely to benefit from technical instruction and advice on marketing and business methods, and concentrates its endeavours on securing if possible that these men are put in a

position to earn a living from their craft. Besides this direct action, the trust's design is to encourage the formation, where they do not already exist, of local committees of influential persons who will interest themselves in this work. The trust is assisted by an annual grant from public funds.

The Young Farmers' Club movement also exists in Scotland, and, though of more recent origin than in England and Wales, is developing successfully and fulfilling a useful function in the scheme of rural life. The number of clubs included in the Scottish Association of Young Farmers' Clubs was, in 1938, fifty-five, with a total membership of approximately 1,700. The Association is at present financed by grants from the Department of Agriculture for Scotland and the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, but it is hoped that, within a few years, it will be self-supporting.

Other post-war developments in the rural life of Scotland have been the institution of such organisations as men's social clubs, discussion societies and wireless listening groups. These, together with the women's rural institutes and the young farmers' clubs, have played an important part in raising the cultural level of rural communities and have gone a considerable way to counteract the migration of agricultural workers in areas where the system of "tied" cottages is in operation.



V. THE REGULATION OF AGRICULTURAL WAGES IN GREAT BRITAIN

The agricultural wage regulation system at present in force in England and Wales was established in 1924 by the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act under which Agricultural Wages Committees (of which there are forty-seven and whose areas are arranged on a county basis) are charged with the duty of fixing minimum rates of wages for all classes of agricultural workers in their areas. Employers and workers are represented on these Committees in equal proportions, and each Committee includes two impartial members appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and a Chairman appointed by the Committee itself. The rates fixed by the Committees do not require approval by any superior authority and, although there is a central Agricultural Wages Board, its normal function is simply that of making orders putting the rates as fixed by the Committees into operation. The Board can only fix rates itself in the event of default by a Committee or at the wish of a Committee.

The Committees are directed by the Act that in fixing minimum rates they shall, "so far as practicable, secure for able-bodied men such wages as, in the opinion of the Committee, are adequate to promote efficiency and to enable a man in an ordinary case to maintain himself and his family in accordance with such standard of comfort as may be reasonable in relation to the nature of his occupation".

While Committees have no power to regulate hours of employment, they usually fix minimum rates of wages on a weekly basis, for which purpose they specify the number of hours in respect of which the weekly rates are payable, employment in excess of such hours being defined as employment to be paid for at overtime rates, which are also determined by the Committees. The system has tended to stabilise working-hours and the worker is protected against being required to work excessive hours without proper remuneration. Moreover, Committees have so used their powers as to bring about better conditions of employment. For example, almost all Committees have made special provision with a view to securing some observance of a weekly half-holiday and also in regard to employment on Sundays and certain public holidays. The improvement in the conditions of employment which has taken place is probably no less important from the point of view of the general welfare of the industry than the regulation of wages.

In addition to the minimum rates for male workers, the Committees also fix rates for women and girls, but, in the majority of areas, these are on an hourly instead of a weekly basis.

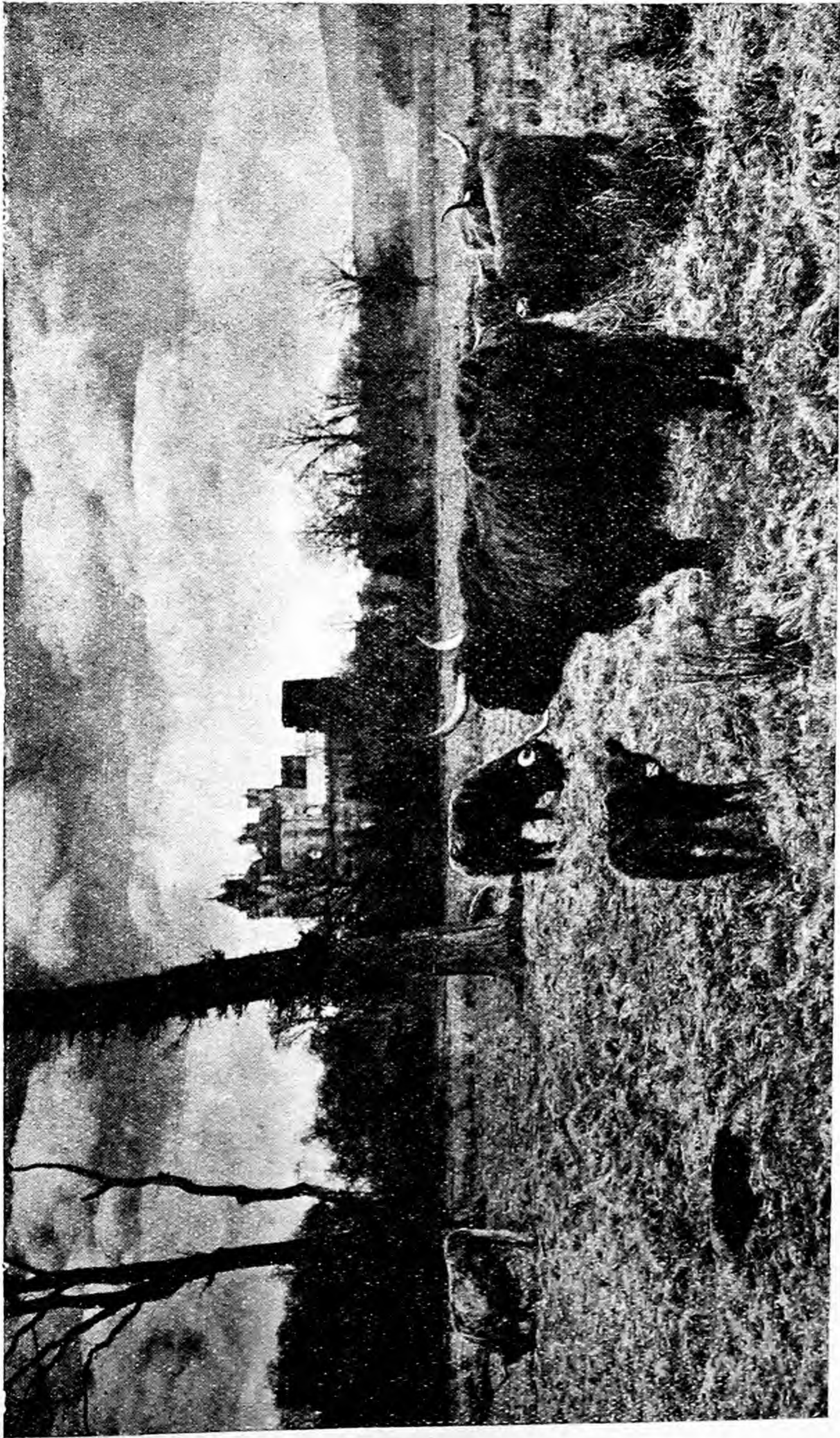
It is customary in agriculture for many employers to provide workers with certain allowances in kind (*e.g.*, cottage, board and lodging, milk, potatoes, etc.), and Committees are empowered to determine what allowances may be reckoned in part payment of minimum wages in lieu of payment in cash, and what values may be attached to these benefits.

The minimum and overtime rates of wages fixed under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) Act are legally enforceable and an employer who fails to pay wages at not less than the statutory minimum rates is liable to prosecution for contravening the Act.

It may fairly be claimed that the system has placed agricultural workers in a position of greater security and has safeguarded their general wage level. This was particularly the case during the worst period of the agricultural depression in 1931-1933, when, if it had not been for the operation of the Act, wages in the countryside might well have fallen chaotically.

A further step towards improving the lot of agricultural workers has recently been taken by Parliament by the passing of the Holidays with Pay Act, 1938, under which Agricultural Wages Committees are empowered to provide holidays and to fix separate remuneration in respect of such holidays for the workers for whom they fix minimum rates of wages. Such directions by Agricultural Wages Committees are legally enforceable.

Similar wage-regulating machinery has recently been set up in Scotland under the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) (Scotland) Act of 1937. Under the Act, eleven district committees have been set up, similarly constituted as in England and Wales, and a Scottish Agricultural Wages Board. The Holidays with Pay Act, referred to above, applies to Great Britain as a whole.



Highland cattle at Douglas Castle, Lanarkshire, Scotland.

(Published by courtesy of The Scotsman.)

VI. RURAL HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

The suspension of building during the war resulted in a severe and general shortage of working-class dwellings of all types. To meet this situation, a number of Housing Acts have been passed, all of which have had one object—the provision for every family in the land, whether living in an urban or a rural district, of a healthy and comfortable home at a rent within its means.

The central authority responsible for the general administration of the Statutes relating to rural housing in England and Wales is the Ministry of Health ; and in Scotland, the Department of Health for Scotland. The local application of the Statutes is, however, entrusted to the local authorities. (It must be borne in mind that in Great Britain specific statutory authority is necessary for every action proposed either by a Government Department or a local authority, and that neither body may act *ultra vires* the statutes which regulate their powers in any particular field.)

Prior to 1919, no provision existed for any financial assistance from the State in the sphere of housing, although the local authorities have possessed since last century power to build new houses and to do everything necessary to this end (*e.g.*, to buy land, to raise loans, and to manage property), as well as to enforce the maintenance of the houses in their districts in a proper state of repair.

The State assistance for house-building which was provided by the Housing Acts of 1919 and 1923 was available in rural as well as in urban areas, but for some years attention was necessarily focused almost exclusively on the provision of new houses in the industrial areas, since it was in those areas that the shortage of working-class dwellings was most acute. It gradually became apparent, however, that special provision was required for rural, or rather for agricultural, housing, to meet the situation created by the fact that the rent-paying capacity of the agricultural worker is substantially lower than that of the urban worker.

A considerable number of houses were indeed built in rural areas with the assistance of the subsidies provided by the Acts of 1919 and 1923, but owing to the high level of building costs prevailing at the time, very few of these houses are let at rents within the means of the agricultural population. There are, of course, in every village people who, while belonging to the working classes, cannot be regarded as forming part of the agricultural population ; consequently, a good many of the

houses built in rural areas are subject to the same rates of subsidy as are applicable in urban areas, and the special rates of subsidy which, from 1924 onwards, became available for agricultural housing apply only to houses reserved for agricultural workers.

FIRST SPECIAL SUBSIDY FOR AGRICULTURAL HOUSING

A special rate of subsidy designed to encourage the building of houses for the agricultural population was introduced for the first time in the "Wheatley" Act of 1924. Under this Act, the normal Exchequer subsidy to local authorities took the form of an annual grant of £9 a year for forty years in respect of each house which was built with the prior sanction of the central authority, and which complied with certain prescribed conditions and was let at a prescribed rent (not sold). The subsidy was increased to £12 10s. in the case of houses situated in agricultural parishes, with the object of enabling houses to be let at rents within the means of the agricultural population without placing an unduly heavy burden on the local rates. Both rates of subsidy were subsequently reduced in 1927 and 1929 by £1 10s., on each occasion with the fall in the cost of building. The subsidy was available both to local authorities and private enterprise, but the condition that the houses must be let at a prescribed rent made it unattractive to private enterprise, and comparatively few houses were built by this agency under this Act.

The number of houses built by local authorities with assistance under this Act was :

30,114 in agricultural parishes in England and Wales ;
36,833 in other parishes in rural districts in England and
Wales ;
1,381 in rural counties in Scotland.

Typical rents of houses built under this Act are 6s. a week exclusive of rates, but rents down to 3s. prevail in certain purely agricultural districts. As will be seen from these figures, the rents of many of these houses were still beyond the means of the ordinary agricultural worker, and enquiries made in 1930 indicated that at that time only about 35% of those built in agricultural parishes were occupied by members of the agricultural population. The subsidies provided by the "Wheatley" Act were finally withdrawn in England and Wales in 1933, and in Scotland in 1935.



No. 18 Old cottage in the rural district of Atcham, Shropshire,
before renovation.



No. 19 Same cottage renovated with assistance under the
Housing (Rural Workers) Acts.

SARAH SINGH CO.

IMPROVEMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION OF EXISTING COTTAGES

In 1926, the first of the Housing (Rural Workers) Acts was passed. These Acts provide financial assistance for the improvement and reconstruction of existing cottages intended for agricultural workers and similar persons, by empowering the local authorities to make grants to private landlords towards the cost of the works of improvement and conversion.

A grant must not exceed two-thirds of the cost of the works or the sum of £100, whichever is the less. Half the grant made by the local authority is repaid to them by the Exchequer. Conditions are attached to the grants, to ensure that the benefit of the improvement goes to the tenant and not to the owner. The most important of these conditions is that for the next twenty years the cottage shall be let to an agricultural labourer or similar person at a rent not exceeding that normally paid by agricultural workers in the district, increased by a sum equivalent to 4% of that part of the cost of the works which is not covered by the grant—*i.e.*, the amount which the owner is called upon to spend from his own pocket. The improvements for which a grant can be given include the rebuilding of walls and the renewing and raising of roofs, the addition of extra rooms, the provision of a water supply and drainage system and of baths and water-closets, cooking facilities and a supply of gas or electricity. Grants cannot be made for works of ordinary repair and maintenance which it is the duty of the owner to carry out at his own cost, and in order to exclude this kind of work, the cost of works for which a grant may be given must not be less than £50.

The Housing (Rural Workers) Acts have now been in operation since 1926, and will continue until 1942, unless further extended. The number of country cottages for which grants had been given up to June 30th, 1938, was 19,161 in England and Wales and 26,800 in Scotland. The response of the owners of country cottages to the original Act when it was first passed in 1926 was disappointing, and for many years the number of cottages improved was far lower than had been hoped. Since 1936, special steps have been taken by the central authorities and by the local authorities to improve and increase the publicity given to the Acts, and these measures have brought about a marked increase in the number of cottages reconstructed.

Apart from these grants, local authorities have power, both under the Housing (Rural Workers) Acts and under the Housing Acts, to advance loans on mortgage to owners for the purpose of repairing and improving working-class cottages.

By 1933, the back of the acute general shortage in England and Wales had been broken and it was held that the activities of local authorities could be diverted from general house-building to the specific problem of improving the housing conditions of certain types of people least able to fend for themselves. The Exchequer subsidies for general building were accordingly withdrawn and the great slum-clearance campaign now nearing completion was launched the same year. This was followed two years later by the first statutory measure for the prevention and relief of overcrowding. The Acts dealing with slum clearance and overcrowding each provided an enhanced rate of subsidy for the relief of these conditions where they occurred among the agricultural population.

SLUM CLEARANCE

The present powers of local authorities to deal with unfit houses date from the Housing Act, 1930, although minor modifications were introduced by the Housing Act of 1935. They have now been consolidated in the Housing Act, 1936.

If an individual house is found to have become unfit for human habitation, and cannot, in view of the local authority, be made fit at a reasonable—that is to say, economic—cost, it is the duty of the authority to invite the owner to discuss with it the condition of the house. Following this discussion, the local authority may, at its discretion, accept from the owner an undertaking either to make the house fit at an uneconomic cost or to close it for habitation until it has been repaired to the authority's satisfaction. If no undertaking is accepted, the local authority must order the owner to demolish the house at his own expense without compensation. The owner has a right of appeal against a Demolition Order to the county court.

Groups of unfit houses are normally dealt with under a different procedure, laid down in Sections 25-33 of the Housing Act, 1936. Where the local authority is satisfied that a group of houses is unfit for human habitation, it must first formally declare the group to constitute a "clearance area". Having declared the area, the authority must either make a clearance order requiring the owner to demolish the property at his own cost without compensation, or it must buy the property, paying only the value of the land as a site cleared of buildings, and itself demolish it. If the local authority is unable to buy the property from the owner for this price by agreement, it must make a compulsory purchase order. Neither clearance nor compulsory purchase orders have any effect until they are confirmed by the Minister of Health, who must hold a public local enquiry before confirming any order which is opposed by the owners. At this enquiry, objections are heard and proposals for repairing the

property may be put forward. Subsequently, all the property is carefully examined by the Inspector of the Ministry of Health appointed to hold the enquiry. The Minister may confirm the order with or without modification, or may refuse to confirm it. In confirming an order, the Minister may direct a payment to be made for any house which, although unfit owing to inherent defects, has been as well maintained as circumstances permitted. These payments are intended to compensate the owner for expenditure on maintenance during the five years preceding the order. They do not imply that the property is regarded as having any value other than as a site cleared of buildings. Unless the Minister of Health decides that it is unnecessary, new houses must be provided by the local authority to replace all houses demolished in clearance areas.

In England, 20,749 new houses have already been built by rural district councils to accommodate the tenants displaced from unfit property, and in addition about 30,000 further houses are under construction at the present time; in Scotland, the number of houses built in rural counties since January 1st, 1934, to accommodate persons displaced from unfit property is 1,207. All these houses qualify for the special Exchequer subsidy for slum-clearance purposes. In addition, 3,240 houses have been built by rural district councils in England and Wales without any specific Exchequer subsidy, and some of these have also been used to accommodate tenants displaced from unfit houses. In Scotland, 749 additional houses are under construction, some of which will be used to replace unfit houses and the remainder to put an end to overcrowding. While the Housing Acts do not require a local authority to accept as tenants of the new houses the actual families displaced from the old houses demolished, in practice this is nearly always done, and the vast majority of the houses built with the slum-clearance subsidy are, in fact, occupied by families who formerly lived in the houses which have been demolished.

RELIEF OF OVERCROWDING

Overcrowding was first defined by Statute in the Housing Act of 1935, which laid down a standard for all working-class houses, the contravention of which, by either the landlord or the tenant, renders the offenders liable to prosecution and a fine. No family which was overcrowded at the time when the provisions of the Act first came into operation is, however, guilty of an offence until offered suitable accommodation in which it would not be overcrowded. Overcrowding is defined in relation both to decency and to health. The standard is designed to secure, first, that no two persons of opposite sexes who are not living together as man and wife shall be compelled to sleep in the same

room ; and, secondly, that the total number of people sleeping in any dwelling shall not exceed a certain maximum figure calculated in relation to the number and size of the rooms and the ages of the occupants. The statutory provisions relating to overcrowding are now consolidated in Part IV of the Housing Act, 1936. In addition to defining overcrowding and making it an offence, the Act imposes on the local authority the duty of surveying the district to ascertain the extent of overcrowding, and of providing the houses necessary to relieve any overcrowding discovered. The first survey of overcrowding was carried out during the year 1936, and showed that the number of overcrowded families in rural districts in England and Wales was 41,928, as compared with 341,554 for the country taken as a whole. In Scotland, the number in rural counties was 18,489, as compared with 290,538 for the country taken as a whole. The number of new houses so far built to relieve overcrowding is 2,804 by rural district councils in England and Wales and 1,216 in rural counties in Scotland, and about 5,500 further houses in England and Wales and 754 in Scotland are under construction at the present time. A great deal of overcrowding has, however, been relieved by the interchange of tenants, small families living in large houses having been persuaded to exchange with large overcrowded families living in small houses. The reports of the medical officers of health for the year 1937, which are now coming to hand, indicate that approximately 35% of the original overcrowding in rural districts has already been relieved.

* * *

EXISTING SUBSIDIES FOR AGRICULTURAL HOUSING

Finally, five years after general subsidies had been withdrawn from ordinary housing, the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act of 1938 introduced a subsidy for houses required to meet the general needs of the agricultural population. The amount of this subsidy, which takes the form of an annual payment from the Exchequer of £10 a year for forty years, should, it is believed, make it possible to let the new houses at rents ranging between 3s. and 4s. a week. The Act did not come into operation until March 30th, 1938, and the time which has since elapsed has for the most part been occupied by the preparation of schemes, few of which have yet reached the stage at which building can be begun. Tenders have, however, already been accepted for the building of 300 houses for the agricultural population by local authorities, and just over 100 by private persons. The extension of the subsidy to houses built by private persons is intended to meet the need for farm cottages on remote and isolated sites where they cannot be conveniently built by the local authority.

The Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1938, does not apply to Scotland, but special subsidies have been made available for the improvement of the housing of the agricultural population in Scotland in the Housing (Agricultural Population) (Scotland) Act, 1938. For houses built by local authorities, the State subsidy under this Act varies from £10 10s. to £15 per annum for forty years, but, in remote areas, the amount may be increased beyond £15. The local authorities will contribute one-third of the State subsidy, or £4 10s. per annum, whichever is the less. For houses provided by private enterprise, grants are available under the Act up to £160 for a three-roomed house and £200 for a larger one. The Exchequer will bear the equivalent of three-quarters of the grant (in the Highlands and Islands seven-eighths) and the balance will be met from the local rates. The subsidies provided by the new Act are available for houses required to meet the general needs of the agricultural population as well as for houses provided to replace unfit houses or to end overcrowding.

In this connection, it may be remarked that Scottish housing conditions generally are relatively more serious than conditions in England. It cannot be said of Scotland that the back of the acute general shortage of houses has yet been broken or that the attack on slums is near an end. To rehouse families living in unfit houses, and to put an end to the grave problem of overcrowding, some 250,000 new houses are still required. This represents not far short of a quarter of the total number of existing working-class houses in the country. The task of remedying these conditions is made difficult by reason of the higher building costs and the shortage of skilled labour in Scotland and, so far as rural areas are concerned, by additional difficulties of inadequate water-supply and limited financial resources. It is hoped, however, that progress in rural areas will be stimulated by the generous State subsidies now to be made available under the Housing (Agricultural Population) (Scotland) Act, 1938, and under the proposed new legislation which is to be introduced in the near future to consolidate the subsidies at present payable in Scotland for the replacement of unfit houses and the relief of overcrowding. In addition, the Department of Health for Scotland is encouraging the use of methods of construction alternative to brick, in an effort to overcome the difficulties arising from the present shortage of bricklayers. As a result, several rural authorities are now building timber houses, which are capable of rapid construction and are particularly suitable to a rural setting.

The subsidies for agricultural housing provided by the Acts passed in 1938 are based on an investigation carried out by the Central Housing Advisory Committee, in the course of which evidence was heard from a number of bodies with an intimate

knowledge of rural housing and of the conditions of agricultural life. Nearly all witnesses laid emphasis on the growing reluctance of young workers to engage in agricultural work, notwithstanding the unsatisfied demand in many parts of the country for competent agricultural labour. These witnesses were unanimously of the opinion that one of the principal causes of this reluctance was the lack of suitable dwellings.

* * *

TYPE OF HOUSE BUILT UNDER THE HOUSING ACTS (ENGLAND AND WALES)

The normal type of house in England and Wales in both urban and rural districts is the two-story cottage housing a single family, and the vast majority of the houses built under the Housing Acts are of this type. In rural districts, the rate of density at which these houses have been built has varied between eight and twelve to the acre. This means that each house has its own separate garden plot, large enough for the cultivation of vegetables and for the drying of clothes. Normally, each new house has a bath and a separate water-closet for the private use of the tenant. In some rural areas, however, where the water supply is limited, the bath has been omitted and an earth-closet substituted for a water-closet. The work now being done to improve rural water supplies will make it possible to provide baths in many districts where the water supply has hitherto been insufficient. The houses now being built by local authorities normally contain a living-room with separate scullery, food store, bathroom and water-closet, and three bedrooms of which at least two are large enough to hold one double or two single beds. A house with three bedrooms is considered suitable for a family of five, or, if the third bedroom is made large enough for two beds, six people. For larger families, houses with as many as five, or even six, bedrooms are being built. These very large houses are often built so as to interlock with small dwellings suitable for elderly couples and single persons, and, should the time come when the large house is no longer required, the two dwellings can be re-divided to provide two houses of moderate size.

Great efforts are being made to ensure that the new houses built in rural areas shall be attractive to look at, and in keeping with the local traditional style of cottage architecture. The Ministry of Health has recently issued a "Rural Housing Manual" containing plans and photographs of suitable cottages, with advice on the points to be borne in mind in designing new cottages in order to secure an attractive appearance.

TYPE OF HOUSE BUILT UNDER THE HOUSING ACTS (SCOTLAND)

In Scottish urban districts, by far the larger proportion of houses built with State assistance are flats in blocks of four, or tenements. In the rural districts, however, a larger proportion of cottage types have been erected.

In the past few years, rural authorities have been encouraged to eliminate the "flatted" types. The Department of Health for Scotland encourages local authorities to provide houses of the cottage type, which preserves the traditional style of architecture of the Scottish countryside.

In Scotland, the majority of the houses provided by local authorities consist of a living-room and two bedrooms, together with the conveniences referred to in the section of this paragraph dealing with England and Wales. A house of this size is regarded as providing accommodation for five adults, two children under the age of 10 being regarded as equivalent to one adult. Houses with three bedrooms are regarded as suitable for the accommodation of seven and a-half adults, and those with four bedrooms as suitable for ten adults.

Through the generosity of a private citizen, and with the co-operation of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, a competition open to all architects practising in Scotland was recently held to obtain good designs of houses suitable for working-class families in rural areas. Full working plans of the winning designs have been published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, and give all the detailed information and guidance required for actual construction. There has been a considerable public demand for copies of these plans, and it is hoped that their publication will stimulate the improvement of design in Scottish rural housing.

* * *

UNASSISTED BUILDING

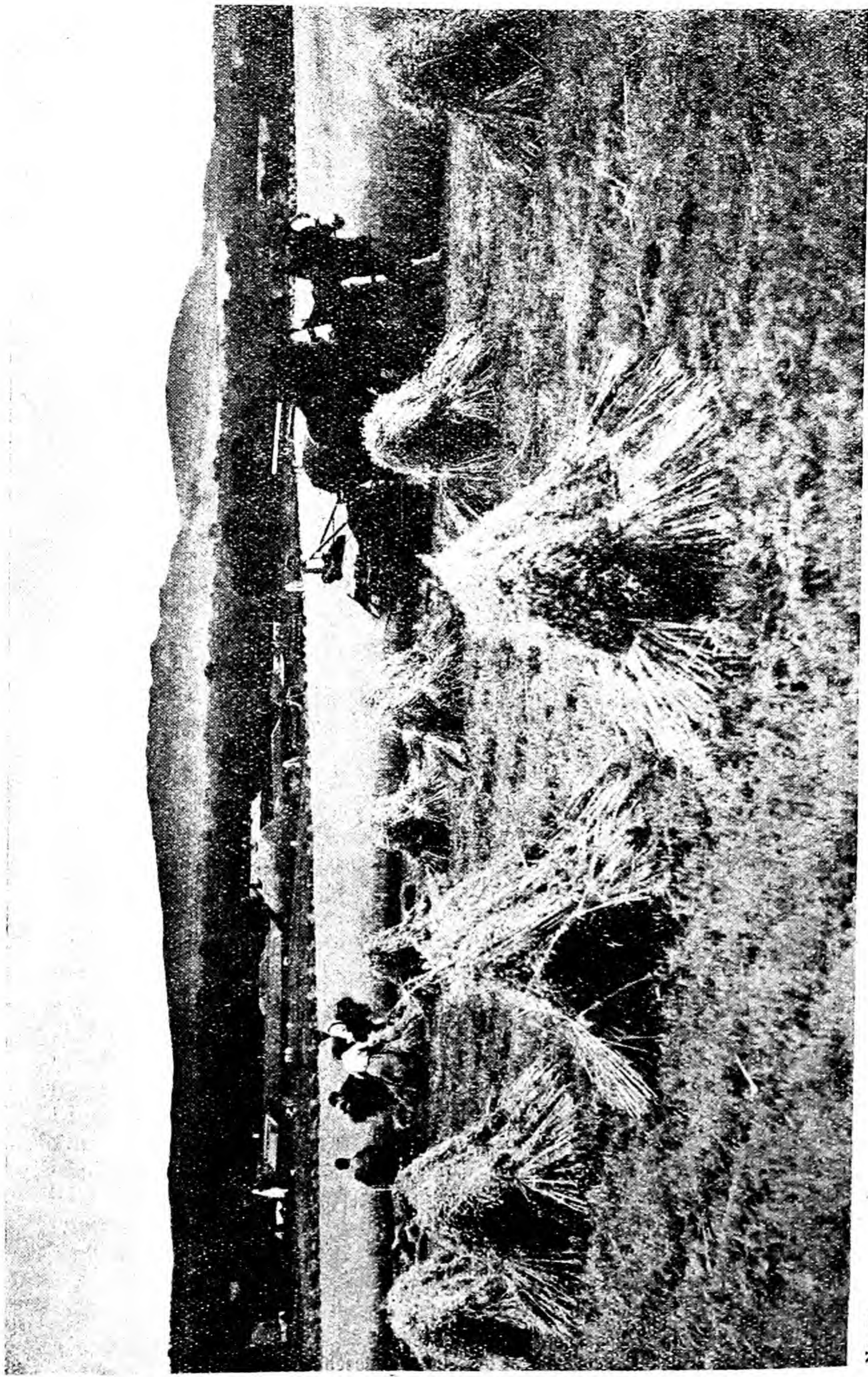
In addition to the houses built with subsidy under the various Housing Acts, a large number of houses have been built in rural districts since the war without any form of assistance. These houses have for the most part been built by private enterprise to meet the normal demand. The vast majority of them have been sold to semi-industrial workers, and others of superior economic condition to agricultural workers living in rural districts, and have been purchased by instalments or with the help of a mortgage obtained from a building society or from the

local authority. The local authorities have, however, themselves built a certain number of houses without specific Exchequer assistance, which have been let to persons belonging to the working classes but not, in general, to members of the agricultural population. The number of houses built since the war in rural districts by private enterprise and by local authorities without subsidy is 497,810 and 3,240 respectively. The corresponding figures for rural counties in Scotland are 3,189 and 118.

* * *

CONCLUSION

As already stated, one of the chief reasons for the reluctance of young people to take up agricultural work is generally held to be the lower standard of housing prevalent in rural areas. The present drive for the improvement of agricultural housing conditions is therefore actuated, not only by reasons of public health, but also by a desire to rehabilitate agricultural life. The unprecedented expansion of building by private enterprise, which has produced in England and Wales approximately 2,500,000 houses for the artisan and black-coated worker during the past twenty years, has left the agricultural population quite untouched. Of the 1,000,000 houses built by local authorities during this period, it is doubtful if more than 20,000 are occupied by agricultural labourers. Up to the present, the agricultural population has been very largely cut off from any share in the striking improvement in living conditions represented by the post-war house with modern internal planning and domestic amenities. The balance of housing conditions must be redressed in favour of the rural areas if a healthy and contented agricultural population is to be maintained. The reason why this problem has been left to the last, however, is because, compared with the vast schemes which were previously absorbing the full energies of local authorities, it was a relatively small one. It is estimated that there are less than half a million agricultural families in England and Wales, the large proportion of whom are, of course, already satisfactorily housed. The improvement of agricultural housing conditions should accordingly be a task well within the capacity of the local authorities, and it is confidently anticipated that the measures now in operation will make it possible to effect a revolutionary change in the next few years.



VII. RURAL NUTRITION IN GREAT BRITAIN

1. It is questionable whether there is in this country a distinct problem of rural nutrition such as emerges so prominently in those continental countries having vast rural areas. The growth of cities and the increase of urban aggregations, coupled with facilities for communication and transport, would, *prima facie*, rather suggest that there can be little difference between the range and availability of foods in towns and rural districts in most parts of the country. Ingrained local dietary customs die hard, however, and it is to be expected that as a result of the enquiries referred to below considerable differences will be revealed in the food habits of rural populations according to geographical distribution, and possibly more marked divergences between the dietaries of urban and rural populations. For example, it is probable that the consumption of vegetables in the Isle of Ely differs in variety and amount from that in industrial areas. Similarly, the consumption of fruit in Somerset may differ from that in Aberdeenshire.

2. There are at present no official data regarding the variations in food consumption as between urban and rural population groups, or among the latter only. The dietary surveys hitherto published by reliable investigators who have proceeded on a scientific basis relate almost entirely to urban families. In 1935, the Minister of Health and the Secretary of State for Scotland appointed the Advisory Committee on Nutrition with the following terms of reference :

“ To enquire into the facts, quantitative and qualitative, in relation to the diet of the people, and to report as to any changes therein which appear desirable in the light of modern advances in the knowledge of nutrition.”

As it observed in its first report issued in March 1937, the enquiry involves two fundamental questions : one of fact—namely, what foods and what amounts of each are consumed by the nation and how the total consumption of these foods is distributed amongst the individual men, women, adolescents and children of all sorts and conditions which make up the nation—and the second—as to any changes which appear desirable—calling for a considered opinion, in the light of the ascertained facts, on the application of the lessons of recent nutritional science to the feeding of the nation. It found as a result of its preliminary survey of the position that the available data were quite inadequate to enable it to answer these questions as regards the national food consumption or the consumption of any particular section of the community. On its recommen-

dation, therefore, two investigations, referred to in the following paragraphs, designed to ascertain more adequate information regarding the dietary habits of the people, have been instituted. The terms of reference of the Committee are very wide, and have been interpreted to cover a comprehensive survey of the diet of the people; and the conduct of the detailed investigations in hand and the consideration of the results will necessarily occupy a considerable time.

3. *Cost-of-living Survey*.—The Ministry of Labour has completed the collection of family budgets in connection with its enquiry to provide the material required for a revision of the basis of the cost-of-living index. On the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Nutrition, this enquiry has been adapted and extended with a view to providing the maximum possible information from the standpoint of nutrition, having regard to its essentially economic objective. Budgets of family expenditure have been obtained in respect of four weekly periods in October 1937 and January, April and July 1938 from over 12,000 families. The great majority of households which have supplied information are those of persons insured against unemployment, including manual workers generally and non-manual workers with incomes not exceeding £250 per year. The enquiry covers agricultural workers as well as workers engaged in industrial, commercial, etc., occupations. It is anticipated that this enquiry will contribute towards the information which the Advisory Committee on Nutrition requires as to the quantities of the various kinds of food obtained by working-class families.

4. *Quantitative Dietary Surveys*.—Even this collection of family budgets can only give rough indications of the way in which the total food consumption is distributed among the whole population. For example, it is difficult to obtain from family budget enquiries particulars of goods consumed away from home, and family budgets do not cover food consumed by residents in hotels and institutions. It is also particularly necessary to know what is the proportion of domestic wastage for each kind of food and—a matter essential to the study of rural dietaries—to know the quantities of food obtained from small holdings and allotments or other sources especially available in rural districts. On the recommendation of the Nutrition Committee, the Ministry has therefore arranged for scientific quantitative studies of the diets of a sufficient number of families to be carried out in England and Wales, particularly in rural areas, and similar studies are being carried out also in Scotland.

The field work of the 300 England-Wales studies was completed about three months ago. The areas are : Isle of Ely,

Surrey, Glossop (suburbs), Somerset, Essex and several villages and country districts in South Wales. These studies have been conducted by trained investigators under the direction of a medical officer of the Ministry. The Scottish studies, covering 200 families, were allotted by the Department of Health for Scotland to Professor Cathcart and Sir John Orr, who have also both completed the field work. It remains, therefore, for the analyses of these studies to be completed after the family diets have been calculated in terms of pure nutrients—*e.g.*, protein, fat and minerals, etc.

5. *Carnegie Research*.—Early in 1937, Sir John Orr commenced a large-scale dietary survey, including clinical examinations, of 1,500 families in Scotland and England, under the auspices of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. The families surveyed, besides those in urban areas, include in Scotland rural villages in Aberdeenshire and Morayshire and mining villages in Fifeshire and, in England, the Isle of Ely and Wisbech. The scope of the survey is as follows :

(a) To ascertain quantitatively and qualitatively the nature of the diets consumed by families of different social and economic classes in various parts of the country ;

(b) To determine the relationship between the diets and the state of development and health of children and adolescents. The clinical experiences will be correlated with the composition of the present diets ;

(c) To ascertain the effects on the growth and health of children of feeding supplements of food.

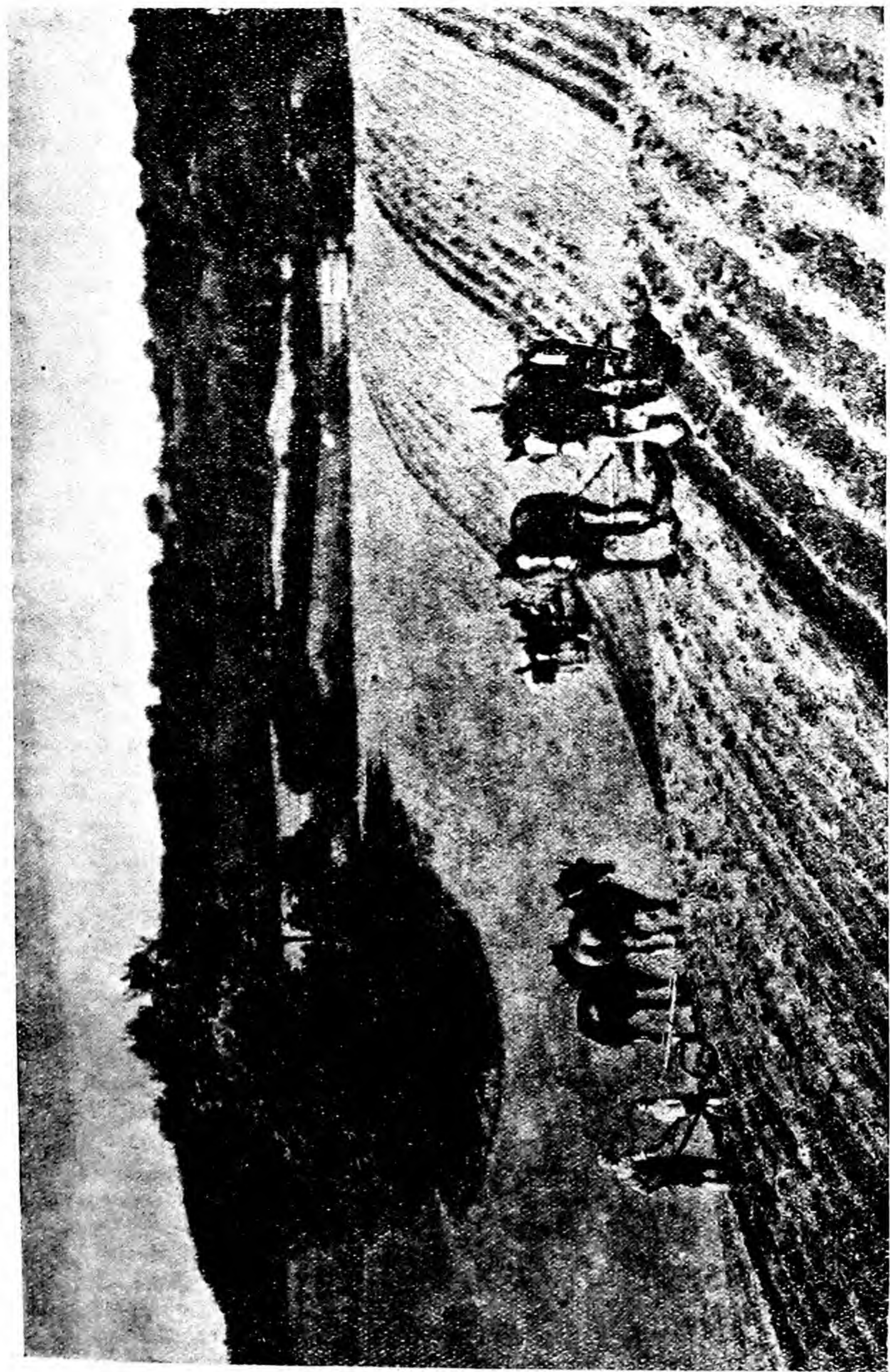
When all the material which will be accumulated as the result of the above investigations has been analysed and considered, it should be possible to draw conclusions, based on comprehensive scientific data, regarding the variations in food consumption between selected groups of the population, and one of the classifications which will no doubt be possible will be a comparison between urban and rural dietaries.

6. It has been urged by the National Federation of Women's Institutes and other bodies that, among the rural population of England and Wales, less fresh milk is being consumed than previously. There are no official figures available regarding consumption in rural districts, and such information as has been published has been derived either from household budget enquiries or from surveys designed to deal only with milk, and there has been little uniformity of technique either in the collection or the analysis of the basic data, which may not invariably be scientifically accurate. It has also been urged that certain conditions attaching to the sale of milk for

manufacture operate so as to restrict the availability of liquid skim-milk for sale for human consumption.

Reference should be made to the "milk in schools" scheme, whereby over $2\frac{1}{2}$ million school-children obtain a third of a pint of milk for a $\frac{1}{2}d.$ instead of at the usual retail price of $1d.$ There are also various arrangements providing both milk and meals either free or at reduced prices to certain sections of the community. These facilities are available to both rural and urban populations alike. Milk is supplied free or at less than cost price to necessitous expectant and nursing mothers by nearly all the maternity and child welfare authorities in the United Kingdom; in some cases, other additional foods are supplied; in the same way, supplies of milk are available to children under 5 in families where the income falls below a certain level. In public elementary schools, meals are provided either free or at reduced prices, according to the financial means of the parents, to children who are unable, by reason of lack of food, to take full advantage of the education provided for them, a definition which is interpreted in the widest possible sense.

Efforts are also being made to raise the standard of nutrition generally by means of propaganda and education. Cookery is a regular subject in the education of the older girls in public elementary schools, and the curriculum usually includes such instruction and training in the principles of proper dieting and their application as are suitable for girls at the ages of 12 to 14 years. Local authorities and voluntary bodies—in country districts an important part is played by the women's institutes—also provide instruction for the older women. Local authorities also organise lectures, "health weeks" and "milk weeks" and publish pamphlets and posters.



VIII. LAND SETTLEMENT IN SCOTLAND

TOPOGRAPHY

Scotland, extending to an area of 29,800 square miles, is made up of the mainland and a great number of islands lying near it to the west and north and is divisible into three distinct regions, the Highlands and Islands to the north and west comprising the crofting counties and occupying about three-fifths of the total area of the country, the Central Lowlands and the Southern Uplands. The two latter are together known as the Lowlands. The Highlands and the Lowlands differ in many respects—geographically, historically, economically and socially.

In the Highlands, there is relatively little cultivable land, much of the surface being covered with coarse grass in the wetter west and heather in the centre. The mountains are mainly deer forests and grouse moors, while the glens are occupied by large sheep farms, on the edges of which, and around the seaboard and on the islands, cluster crofting townships whose characteristic feature is the croft with a stance for house and byre, a small patch of arable land, and a common grazing where the sheep and cattle owned by the members of the township find sustenance. Arable farms are few, being mainly on the low-lying land on the north-east coast. The Highlands support only about 7% of Scotland's population of almost five millions. Many Highlanders speak Gaelic as well as English; indeed, in the Western Isles, a few speak nothing but their ancient tongue.

The Southern Upland region of the Lowlands is lower than the Highlands. River valleys are wider than the deep, narrow glens of the north and contain better soil; there is therefore much more plough land and pastures are richer, while the climate is not so severe as in the Highlands. Between the Southern Uplands and the Highlands lie the Central Lowlands, extending to no more than one-fifth of the whole country, yet supporting four-fifths of the population. This region contains the most valuable agricultural land in the country, is rich in coalfields and is the home of Scotland's industries.

DEVELOPMENT

Pre-war.—By the latter part of last century, the crofting population of the Highlands had been brought to a serious plight. The absence of any form of security of tenure had

facilitated the entry of sheep-farmers from the south, accompanied by wholesale removals of small tenants to the rocky seaboard, the higher and less fertile straths and moors, and the already overcrowded areas occupied by other communities. Famines were frequent and the disorder attendant on them led to the passing in 1886 of the first Act of Parliament to deal with Highland agrarian problems. Under it, the crofters were given the rights of security, a fair—as distinct from a competitive—rent revisable every seven years, and compensation for improvements; and the Crofters' Commission was appointed to deal with questions relating to crofters' tenancies and to grant enlargements of existing holdings. In 1897, the Congested Districts Board was instituted, with power to purchase land for subdividing into, and equipping as, new holdings and enlargements for crofters in the congested districts of the Highlands. Owing to financial restrictions, progress in the way of appeasing the land hunger was slow. There was a growing demand for settlement, and the improvements effected in the Highlands and Islands opened up the question of extending similar benefits to the Lowlands, where a potential demand for small-holdings existed. In this situation, a further law was passed in 1911. The Board (now the Department) of Agriculture for Scotland was constituted to take the place of the Congested Districts Board and the Scottish Land Court was created as a tribunal in place of the Crofters' Commission. The privileges already afforded to crofters in the Highlands were extended to certain classes of small-holders throughout Scotland, the statutory limit of holdings being fixed at £50 rental or 50 acres, excluding any common pasture or grazing. The designation "landholder" was substituted for that of "crofter" and the system of tenure became known as landholders' tenure.

One of the main duties of the Department under the new Act was the constitution of new, and the enlargement of existing, landholders' holdings on privately-owned estates over the whole country. This was done by agreement with landlords, or, subject to a statutory procedure, by compulsion. Before progress was almost entirely arrested by the war, it became apparent that the financial provision was insufficient and that the procedure involved was lengthy and costly.

Post-war.—In order to provide a means of land settlement, with preference for ex-servicemen, four new measures were passed, the most important being the Act of 1919, which extended the Department's powers so that land for subdivision purposes could be acquired by agreement or compulsorily over the whole country and provided more liberal funds than were previously available. The Department was thus enabled to work on a larger scale than before, and during the eight years following the close of the war, it created 3,400 new holdings and enlargements

mainly for ex-service applicants. Although procedure in effecting settlements on properties remaining in private ownership was simplified by the 1919 Act, settlements of this nature, except where carried out by agreement, were, and still are, subject to protracted procedure. The result has been that policy has gradually changed over to the formation of holdings on lands acquired and held by the State.

All holders settled by the Department, whether on their own or private estates, were given the benefits of landholders' tenure. The Department assisted holders to erect dwelling-houses and steadings on their holdings by advancing loans over long periods at low rates of interest. In the case of pastoral schemes—these being almost entirely in the Highlands—loans were made to enable groups of holders to take over sheep stocks to be worked on the club or co-operative system.

Present Day.—In 1932, the Department arrived at the conclusion that under existing conditions the type of small-holding which would most readily lend itself to successful working was the small-sized unit ranging from about 5 to 10 acres devoted to the intensive production of poultry, eggs, pigs, market-garden and glass-house produce, fruit, and other commodities which are most valuable when freshly marketed, and that an opportunity to form such holdings existed near large consuming centres in the industrial belt. The policy of forming holdings of this type found expression in the Act of 1934, under which the funds made available in that year and in each of the two succeeding years amounted to £250,000. More than 1,000 holdings of this class have been formed, together with a relatively small number of holdings of about 50 acres, to utilise land and existing farm buildings not suitable for closer subdivision.

The Department carried out all adaptation works for these holdings including the erection of buildings and the provision of any necessary water supplies, access roads and fencing, and let the holdings as so equipped at reasonable rents on lease under ordinary agricultural tenure. Under this system, with the Department as landlord providing the land and fixed equipment, the tenants enjoy in practice fixity of tenure and may employ the whole of their working capital in the development of production on their holdings. Buildings are now of a standardised type for all holdings of the small class. They consist of a four-apartment house with scullery, larder and bathroom, and a shell outbuilding suitable for internal adaptation for individual requirements. Where current is available, the buildings are wired for electricity.

At the present time, the Department is continuing to provide holdings of this special class in the industrial belt; but it is also forming in the Lowlands holdings of the "family-farm" type, suitable for general farming operations, of which dairying and

stock-raising may be emphasised, while, in the Highlands, it is meeting, as opportunity offers, the demand for enlargements and for holdings of the classes peculiar to that part of the country. In the Highlands and Islands, where landholders' tenure grew out of local historical and social conditions and where it may be termed indigenous, that tenure will usually continue to be applied to the Department's holdings.

The maximum limit of the funds annually made available by Parliament is now £175,000 per annum.

Plots for Unemployed Persons.—Land Settlement in Scotland covers a scheme for the provision of plots of land for unemployed men in the vicinity of their homes for the purpose of offering them the opportunity of useful work in producing vegetables, fruit and other foodstuffs, and in keeping poultry and rearing pigs. The plots vary in size from one quarter of an acre to one acre. No rent is charged for the first year and assistance by way of loan to provide the necessary plants, seeds, tools and fertilisers is given. By 1938, 1,883 plot-holders were in occupation of plots embracing 1,275 acres at 119 centres in the industrial areas. Reports indicate that, generally, the scheme is having a beneficial effect, moral and physical, on the men participating.

Ladder Scheme.—Some of these unemployed plot-holders show by their initiative and experience that they are qualified but for their lack of resources to undertake the tenancy of holdings of the small intensive type. In selected cases, applicants may obtain assistance from sources under private control to enable them to accept the tenancy of small-holdings provided by the Department. Others, requiring greater experience than can be gained on their plots before they are ready to undertake the full responsibilities of tenants of holdings, undergo training on holdings over periods extending from fifteen to eighteen months under the supervision and direction of the Department's officers, assisted by the advisory officers of the Scottish colleges of agriculture.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

Applicants settled.—The operations of the Crofters' Commission and the Congested Districts Board resulted in 640 settlers being placed in new holdings and in 3,189 enlargements being granted in the Highlands and Islands prior to 1912. From 1912 to 1938, the Department settled 5,725 applicants in new holdings and 2,023 in enlargements, a total of 7,748, including 1,240 placed in vacated holdings and enlargements. The total number of applications for land in Scotland satisfied from 1886 to 1938 was therefore 11,577.

In the Highlands and Islands, the holders settled have generally had previous connection with agriculture. Equipped with

this experience, a good physique, and the virtue of frugality, there is generally little cause for doubt as to the ultimate success of the settlers. Of the applicants settled in new holdings formed by the Department over the whole country, 72% were previously engaged in agriculture and fishing or were crofter fishermen, while 28% were drawn from a variety of other callings not connected with agriculture. In contrast with these figures, it is of interest to note that, on some representative present-day Lowland schemes, composed mainly of the small-sized holdings for intensive production, it is found that 52% of the settlers were previously engaged in agriculture and the remaining 48% were not. Many of the latter have had some previous experience of horticulture, poultry-keeping, etc., and this renders it possible to put such men into these holdings with reasonable prospects of success. Holdings of the larger or "family-farm" class are naturally filled by men of agricultural experience—farmers' sons, grieves, ploughmen, dairymen, shepherds, and farm-workers generally. A few have been away from agriculture for a time, but are drawn back eventually to the land with their savings.

Settlements formed.—The total area of land made available in Scotland since 1886 extends to 861,066 acres (almost one-twentieth of the whole area of the country), on which 5,148 new holdings and 5,189 enlargements have been created. Of this area, 803,989 acres are in the Highlands and Islands. Here effort was primarily directed towards the granting of enlargements to the crofting townships, and many schemes of this kind have been projected wherever land was available. Work of this nature is no less important in this part of the country than the setting-up of new homesteads, for the original holdings so enlarged are kept in being as a result of it. Migration schemes have also been undertaken. These involved the transference of families from communities where congestion was acute to land made available in other districts. A few years ago, sixty-eight families were taken out of one island in the west to another nearer the mainland and to-day they are living under conditions which their former homes could not offer them. The limits of £50 rent or 50 acres, excluding common pasture, imposed by statute allow of a wide variation in the character of holdings. On schemes promoted by the Department in the Highlands and Islands the holdings vary from those prevalent in the Islands and on the mainland seaboard, consisting of 1 to 5 acres of arable land with a share in a common hill-grazing, to the club pastoral holding in the straths and valleys comprising anything up to 15 acres of arable land and a share in extensive common hill-pasture, and so on to the "family-farm" pastoral and mixed arable holdings of the maximum limit of rent or acreage. Store sheep and cattle, and wool are the chief products of the pastoral holdings; cereals, hay, potatoes, fat and store cattle and sheep

are produced by the arable "family farm"; while, on the small-type holding, produce for sale is less, products such as eggs, milk, butter and potatoes being mostly for home consumption.

In the Lowlands, land settlement is on a different footing. Here it is a case of taking over estates diverse in size and character and ranging from the single farm to the estate which, before subdivision, embraced perhaps twenty farms and subdividing them into holdings, each of which must be capable of being self-supporting. Over the Lowlands, types of farming vary considerably. Soil, climate and markets have determined the right kind of farming for the different regions and it has been necessary for the Department to create holdings of every size and type from the 50-acre mixed arable, stock-rearing or dairying holding to the holding of 5 to 10 acres suitable for intensive production. In the industrial belt, the Department secures land as near as possible to good marketing centres, the land procurable being usually single farms, on each of which is established a colony of, on the average, about twenty settlers.

Contribution to Housing.—It became apparent, within a few years after the passing of the Act of 1886, that, as a direct result of the rights of security and compensation conferred on crofters under landholders' tenure, great improvements were being effected in housing conditions in the Highlands and Islands. The prevailing "black" house—a rude structure of stone and clay with a thatched roof, in which the crofter's family and his stock were housed—began to disappear and to-day only a very few of the primitive "black" houses remain. In their place stand well-constructed, hygienic, stone and slated cottages and separate steadings built mainly by the labour of the crofter, the cost of materials being met from loans advanced by the Department.

In the rural areas of the Lowlands, the poorly equipped farm when taken over has its buildings repaired and adapted and its other equipment renovated, and the new holdings formed are equipped with tidy, four-apartment cottages with modern conveniences and new steadings, varying from the single building for the small, intensively-worked holding to the various equipment necessary for the larger-sized arable, dairying and stock-raising holdings.

The numbers of houses and steadings which the Department, under its land-settlement and crofter-housing schemes, will have erected or improved on completion of the schemes to which it is at present committed are 7,710 and 3,691 respectively. The estimated initial cost of this housing provision is £2,539,000.

Economic Results.—The Department has no lack of evidence as to outstanding successes amongst small-holders settled—men who began in a small way on holdings of every type and have

gradually built up out of profits considerable businesses. As in other walks of life, success depends largely on the individual. Statistics show that failures have been comparatively few, and have occurred chiefly among ex-service applicants settled under Government pledge in the post-war period, who, being for the most part hurriedly trained in agriculture and subsidised for stock and equipment, could not stand up against the heavy fall in agricultural prices that occurred before they were properly established. But the value of land settlement is to be judged, not by the conspicuous successes or by the few who have failed, but by those holders—a very large proportion of the total settled—who are making a living under the healthiest conditions for themselves and their families.

The ordinary economic test cannot be applied to land settlement in the crofting districts of the Highlands and Islands. Owing to the small extent of arable land contained in his holding and the character of the soil and climate, the crofter cannot normally depend entirely on the cultivation of crops, and large areas of land are therefore necessary for grazing the township's cattle and sheep. To subdivide the area held by a township into economic self-contained holdings for a fraction of its population is impracticable. The alternative is to secure any suitable land that can be got for enlarging the common grazings and for meeting the demand, which remains strong, for more holdings of this very small type. In this way, the whole community benefits. The contribution which such holdings make to the family maintenance is considerable and is supplemented by wages or income earned from fishing, shooting, road construction and miscellaneous seasonal occupations. It is on these holdings that the women knit hosiery and spin and weave for sale the well-known tweed cloths. While conditions of life on the poorer crofts are capable of improvement, these holdings have bred, and still breed, a race of enterprising and independent men who, with their families, live a contented life. It can be claimed without question that, as a result of land-settlement operations in the Highlands and Islands, living conditions have been greatly improved; much of the worst congestion has been relieved; the holders have been enabled to acquire valuable sheep stocks; and housing has been revolutionised.

In the Lowlands, and in those parts of the Highlands and Islands where conditions are somewhat similar to those in the Lowlands, many holdings of the "family-farm" type bordering on the statutory limit of acreage or rental have been formed with successful results. Such holdings, with their occupants recruited mostly from the agricultural classes, have been easily and naturally absorbed into Scottish rural life. They are accepted as providing a necessary and suitable method of giving the agricultural worker a chance of stepping up or the farmer's or

small-holder's son of launching out on his own. The results naturally vary according to the skill and industry of the holder ; but a reasonable livelihood should be assured.

It is yet too early to assess the results on holdings of the 5- to 10-acre intensive type in the Lowlands, as settlements of this nature were begun only in 1933. Undoubtedly, the holdings carry bigger populations than did the land on which they were established and, in general, they are being satisfactorily managed. The occupants, with their limited resources, are turning their acquired experience to profitable use and are at least making a living, while many are already enjoying an income greater than that of the ordinary wage-earner. A greater quantity of produce is obtained from these intensively worked holdings than from the farms which they replaced ; and it would seem that already those holdings which have been constituted for a few years are becoming merged into their economic environment without any noticeable disturbance of markets.

Experience indicates that small-holdings generally have weathered difficult economic conditions as well as, if not better than, larger agricultural units. The small-holder is dependent chiefly on labour which he himself and his family provide, while, more often than not, his holding is developed on mixed lines, not only ensuring a steady income all the year round, but also minimising loss when seasons are unfavourable to one form of production or cultivation.

Social Benefits.—In the crofting communities of the Highlands and Islands, a greater degree of leisure is available, especially during the off-season for fishing and at those times when opportunities for wage-earning are scarce, than falls to the lot of small-holders in other parts of the country. This has tended towards a social life of a high order producing important contributions to the Celtic musical and literary festivals and to the community-drama. The Highland crofter, though content with his simple life, is independent and ambitious ; he is fully alive to the value of higher education and is willing to endure sacrifices in order that one or more of his children may make use of their native intellectual capabilities. Many crofters' sons have reached positions of responsibility in the learned professions, in commerce and in industry.

The small-holder who depends entirely on his holding for his livelihood—particularly the settler in a holding of the maximum size—leads a strenuous life, with little time for leisure. Normally, absence from home is for the purpose of visiting the local weekly market and agricultural shows and gatherings, where the transaction of business is combined with social intercourse and where new ideas are pooled and topics of mutual interest are discussed. What leisure time comes their way is spent by the holders with their families and neighbours, or at the village hall,

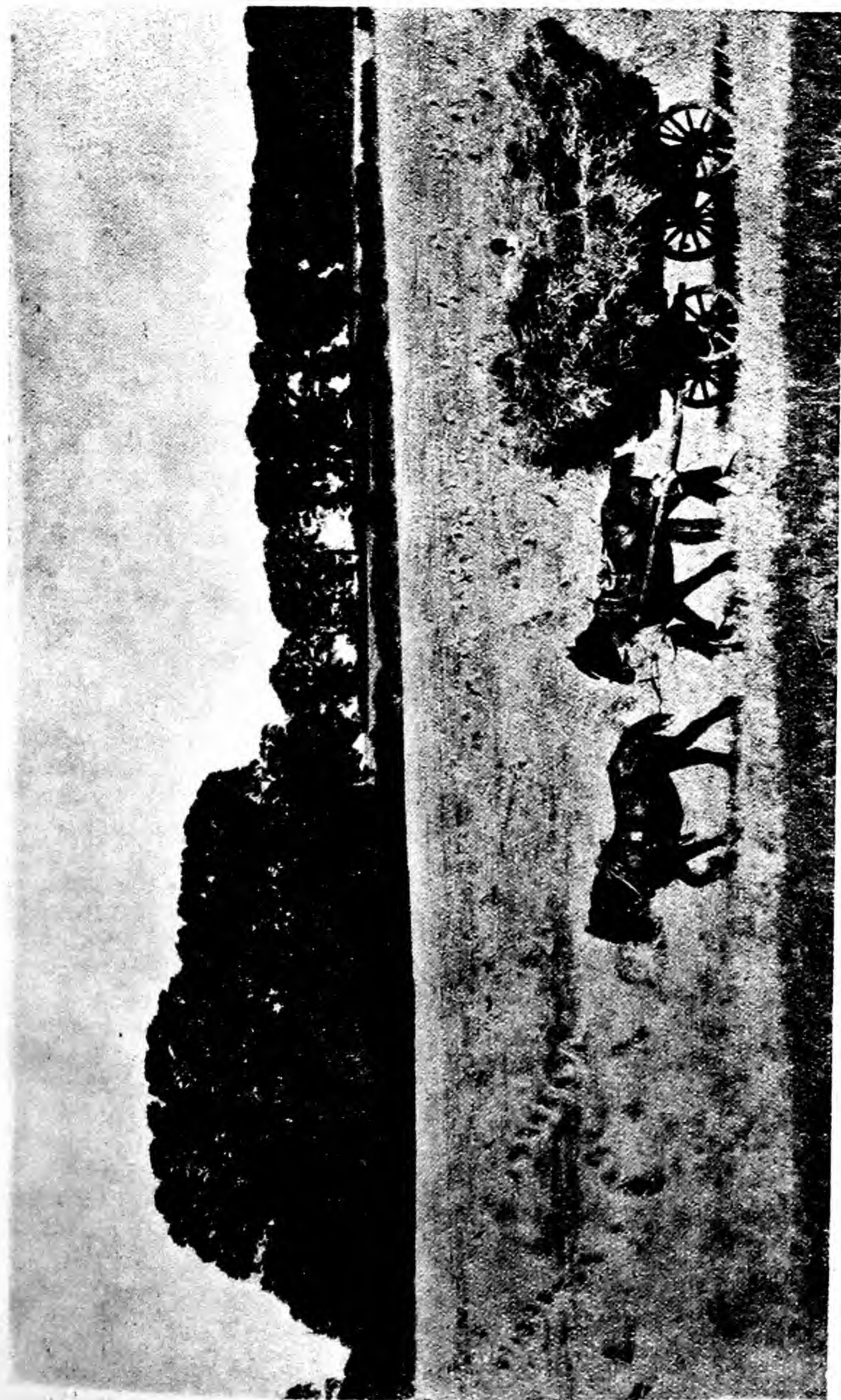
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which is, particularly in the winter evenings, well attended, whether it be for lectures, concerts, dances or dramatic study.

Holders and their families drawn from the industrial classes and placed in the small-sized holdings of the intensive type in the Lowlands are near urban centres, where recourse to the recreations to which they are accustomed can be had without difficulty if desired, while the advantages of better housing and health, fresher food and greater security than can be enjoyed by the wage-earner are realised. A longer time must elapse before these schemes are fully absorbed in the normal structure of rural life; but already, in many instances, successful and permanent transference of industrial workers to the country has been carried out.

The development of the rural bus services consequent on the provision of improved roads has been mainly responsible for the change which has come about since the war in the standard of life of the small-holder's wife. Before the war, there was no real respite from the daily routine, but to-day she is frequently within minutes of market or town, where she may shop, market the smaller products of the holding such as eggs, poultry and butter, and make contact with other women from a wide area. The Scottish Women's Rural Institutes, which are well distributed over the country, have been of invaluable service in stimulating interest in arts and crafts and domestic science.

The need for the small-holder to receive helpful guidance and advice has not been overlooked. The Department keeps contact with the holders whom it settles, giving advice where such it necessary or desired. This is especially the case at the outset of a scheme. The agricultural colleges present to the small-holder the facts of agriculture and its science by lectures at local centres and demonstration work, while their county organisers are at the disposal of holders for instruction. The Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society fosters agricultural co-operation amongst the holders.



Haymaking in England.

(*Photograph by J. DIXON-SCOTT, F.R.P.S., London, supplied by the Travel and Industrial Development Association of Great Britain and Ireland.*)

IX. MEDICAL SERVICE IN THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND

Parts of Scotland, because of the sparsity of the population, the topographical features of the country and the poor economic circumstances of the people, were known for a long time to have a most inefficient medical service, and it was felt by everybody that something had to be done to improve matters. An exhaustive enquiry by a Commission set up by Parliament in 1912 established beyond doubt that the medical services in many parts of Scotland were totally inadequate, and Parliament, on receipt of the report of this Commission, passed in 1913 the Highlands and Islands (Medical Service) Act, by which it was enacted that annually a certain sum of money, to be called the Highlands and Islands (Medical Service) Fund, would be voted in accordance with approved schemes "for the purpose of improving medical service, including nursing, in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and otherwise providing and improving means for the prevention, treatment and alleviation of illness and suffering therein".

The Fund applies to "crofters, cottars, dependants of insured persons and others in like circumstances on whom the doctor's usual fee would be an undue burden". In other words, there is now made available to those who could not afford to pay for it a medical service whenever that may be required. This is accomplished by means of subsidies paid by the Department of Health for Scotland to the general practitioners practising in the affected areas, in return for which these practitioners, who in all cases live somewhere within the area, must, despite the distance at which the patient may live from the doctor's residence, attend the above-mentioned classes of people at a modified fee. The most that can be charged to these people is 5s. for a first visit and 3s. 6d. for each subsequent visit in the same illness. The medical man cannot charge more, indeed often gets less, but he is assured that he at least receives compensation for his travelling and time—and these are the chief factors in calculating the amount to be paid to him by the Department. The result is that the medical service in the Highlands and Islands has been completely revolutionised, and this is reflected, *inter alia*, in the enormous increase of visits now being paid to those to whom the Fund was specially meant to apply. In brief, the position is that no sick person in these remote areas need now lack medical attendance by reason of inability to pay for it. The Fund has no responsibility for medical attendance on the indigent sick—this responsibility falling on the local authorities—nor for attendance on those who can afford to pay the doctor's usual fee; but his presence in the

area means that to all classes of the people the services of a medical man are available. It is a condition of the subsidy paid to a doctor that he possesses an automobile, so that with the greatest expedition he can respond to all calls for his services. A noteworthy result of the payment of these subsidies is the type of medical man who is now attracted to the Highlands and Islands. Formerly it was very difficult, if not impossible, to get doctors to settle in some parts of the Highlands and Islands, but now the difficulty is in many cases to make the proper selection from a large number of well-qualified applicants.

It may be of interest to mention that the population of that part of the Highlands and Islands to which the Fund applies¹ is 327,437, and the number of doctors practising therein is 178, so that on an average there is one doctor to every 1,859 persons.

It is to be noted that the Highlands and Islands Fund does not provide the whole income of doctors working in the highland areas, but in large measure it supplements the income these doctors derive from their work in providing (1) medical attendance under the National Health Insurance scheme to insured persons; (2) medical attendance on the sick poor under arrangements made by county councils; and (3) medical attendance on those who are able to pay the doctor's usual fee.

The schemes under the Highlands and Islands (Medical Service) Act are fairly comprehensive, and the aim of these is to make reasonably available to the people in the Highlands and Islands all that is essential in a full medical service. Under the head of "nursing service", grants may be paid to nursing associations or other bodies—for example, a public health authority—to assist in maintaining district nurses. Throughout Scotland, general nursing services required in the homes of the working-classes are provided by visiting nurses employed by district nursing associations. These associations are maintained by voluntary subscriptions and collections, but in the Highlands and Islands area, owing to the generally poor economic conditions of the people, voluntary effort does not suffice to maintain these local nursing associations. Liberal grants from the Highlands and Islands Fund are therefore made to the associations, to enable them to meet their expenditure.

The Fund can also be used to assist in the provision of specialised services; to help to maintain hospitals; build houses for doctors and nurses; extend telegraph and telephone

¹ This area comprises the counties of Argyll, Caithness, Inverness (excluding the Burgh of Inverness), Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland, Orkney, Shetland, and the Highlands district of Perthshire. This area, about 400 miles by 150 miles, embraces more than half the land surface of Scotland, but contains only one-seventeenth of the total population.

lines ; help with laboratories, clinics, dentistry and ophthalmology ; provide holiday relief for doctors and assist in the maintenance of an ambulance service. Much has been done in many of these directions. For example, concurrently with the medical service, the nursing services have steadily improved and have been extended. In 1914, the number of nurses at work in the Highlands and Islands was 107, of whom only forty-seven were fully trained, and thirty had little or no training. Now there are 210 nurses subsidised from the Highlands and Islands (Medical Service) Fund, and 190 of these are fully trained. Further, it being recognised that, just as with the medical service, the best cannot be got out of it unless provision is made for speedy and comfortable transport, approximately half of the nurses have now small cars, and it is hoped that, by means of voluntary effort and financial assistance from the Fund, this form of transport will become general for the district nurses.

Development beyond the primary essentials—medical and nursing—has been begun and will go much further, till ultimately the whole framework of requisite specialised services is completed. Already full-time resident surgeons, each possessing the degree of Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, are at work in an operative and consultant capacity in the Shetland, Orkney, Lewis, Sutherland, Caithness, and Fort William areas, which were formerly far removed from specialist assistance, but in which the people have now at their doors a service which should be their due, but which previously was difficult, if not impossible, to obtain, and then perhaps only at great risk to their lives. These surgeons do much major and minor surgery, as well as radiology, etc., in well-equipped hospitals, and the success of this particular service has been very marked, proclaimed as it is by the people themselves to be “a perfect God-send”. The introduction of similar or slightly modified services to other areas in the Highlands and Islands is under consideration. It may fairly be said that, as a supplement to the ordinary statutory services, the Highlands and Islands (Medical Service) Fund has solved, or is in the process of solving, the main difficulties of providing medical and ancillary services for the population of this geographically difficult, sparsely populated and economically poor area.



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Lurigedan Mountain and the Vale of Cushendall, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland.

(Photograph supplied by the Travel and Industrial Development Association of Great Britain and Ireland.)

X. RURAL CONDITIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

I. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

The basis of public health administration in Northern Ireland is an Act passed in 1878. Under it, sanitary authorities were established for each urban and rural district, and powers were given to these authorities to deal with water supplies, sewage disposal, nuisances, lighting, buildings and infectious diseases. They can acquire land for their purposes either by agreement or, if necessary, by compulsion.

In rural areas, the sanitary authority is now known as the "Rural District Council". There are thirty-three of these, with populations varying from 3,600 to 37,000 persons.

Besides the rural districts, the larger area—known as the county—is now also concerned with certain special public health services. There are six counties, with populations varying from 58,000 to 209,000 persons.

Besides county and district councils, there are bodies known as "Boards of Guardians". Their primary duty is the relief of the poor, but they also administer very important medical services.

The councils of counties and rural districts are elected by the ratepayers. The members of the boards of guardians consist of the rural district councillors with representatives from the urban districts.

All these local authorities are under the control of a central Government Department—the Ministry of Home Affairs—whose function it is to see that they carry out their duties properly, and to act generally as adviser to them.

The rural district councils in Northern Ireland have made extensive use of the powers conferred on them. Each has several medical officers of health, assisted by subordinate officers to look after matters affecting the health of the public; and the following brief notes give some indication of the extent to which sanitary and other public health services have been provided.

Water Supplies.

Isolated houses have to depend, of course, on wells and streams, and, except in the case of better class houses, the supply has to be carried in buckets, but most of the small villages, with populations between 300 and 900 persons, have piped supplies with stand-pumps in the street. Many of the houses in these villages have the water laid on.

Samples of water used for domestic purposes are regularly taken for examination, and appropriate measures taken if the water is found to be contaminated.

Sewerage.

The ordinary isolated rural cottage has usually an earth-closet or a privy midden, and the contents of these are put on the land. The more important houses, which have water pumped into them from wells, have water-closets emptying into cesspools.

The system of earth-closets and privy middens still prevails also to a large extent in the small villages, though usually there are sewers to carry off slops and rain water. Since piped water supplies have been made available, many houses are now having water-closets put in, and proper sewers with purification plant are being constructed in these villages.

As an example of what is going on, it may be mentioned that one rural district is at present carrying out a scheme costing about £80,000 for providing water supplies and sewers for ten small towns scattered over an area of some 50 to 60 square miles.

Buildings.

All rural district councils are now required to make regulations relating to the erection of houses for the purpose of securing stability, proper sanitary arrangements, ventilation and lighting and prevention of fire.

Nuisances.

The villages are beginning to provide proper dumping-places for domestic refuse, and in some of the more thickly populated rural areas the council arranges for the collection of household refuse.

Lighting.

Some of the small villages were formerly lit by gas, but since the introduction of electricity, the lighting of villages has now become more general.

Infectious Diseases.

Notification of infectious diseases is in force in the area of every rural district council, save one, and certain infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, are universally notifiable. Infected cases may be compulsorily removed to hospital if they cannot be properly isolated at home. There are hospitals for infectious cases in practically every rural district.

Medical Services.

The rural areas of Northern Ireland are well provided with medical practitioners. There are many in private practice, but the State secures that there is always a doctor available for attendance on the poor. Each poor-law union is divided up into several dispensary districts, each in charge of a medical officer, and any poor person is entitled to medical attendance free. In nearly all of the dispensary districts, there is also a midwife appointed to assist the medical officer in maternity cases. Each board of guardians has its own hospital, to which poor persons are admitted free or at a nominal charge, or it has an arrangement with some other board of guardians for the use of its hospital. Cases which cannot be dealt with in these hospitals may be sent to any other suitable hospital. Nearly half of these hospitals have now been separated from the poor law and placed under committees of their own, and their services are utilised by all classes of the community.

Besides these hospitals belonging to the boards of guardians, there is a country hospital in each county, which is expected to take the more difficult cases.

It is also possible for residents in rural areas to gain admittance to the voluntary hospitals which have been established in the towns.

The dispensary medical service is now supplemented by that given under the National Health Insurance Acts. Practically all workers are insured under these Acts and are entitled to free medical treatment from a doctor chosen by themselves from a panel recognised by the Government department concerned.

In addition to the services referred to, certain special medical services have been entrusted to county councils. These provide for the treatment of tuberculosis at home or in sanatoria, the treatment of venereal diseases, the welfare of the blind, the medical inspection and treatment of school-children and the supervision of midwives. Committees of the county councils are also responsible for the provision of treatment for mental cases.

There are five mental hospitals for the six counties, one being owned jointly by two counties.

In many places, voluntary societies have been formed for the purpose of providing nurses for the poor, and some of these also look after maternity cases. Where these societies undertake to look after maternity cases and children up to 5 years of age, they may get a grant from the rural district council or the Government.

2. HOUSING

Up till about fifty years ago, housing conditions in the rural areas of Northern Ireland were distinctly bad. The farms were small, 65 % of the holdings being no more than 30 acres in extent ; the farm houses themselves were small, with little in the way of sanitary conveniences, and the surroundings unsavoury. The houses of the labourers were naturally, if anything, worse.

In 1883, however, the first of a series of Acts was passed designed to provide better houses for agricultural labourers. The local authorities were given power to acquire land compulsorily and build houses—the cost being met out of the rates with the aid of a substantial contribution from the Government. Under these Acts, some 8,368 houses have been built.

In more recent years, grants were also given by the local authorities and the Government to private builders, and a considerable number of additional houses have been erected in this way.

Between 1926 and 1937, the number of houses in rural areas rose from 153,947 to 159,254, an increase of 5,307. The number of persons per private house in rural areas was 4.31 in 1926 ; in 1937, it was 4.09, which shows an improvement in housing conditions.

The new houses are well built of brick with slated roofs, tiled floors in the kitchen and boarded floors in the other rooms. They usually contain a living-room, three bedrooms and scullery. Where no sewerage system exists, they have properly constructed dry closets outside, and as gardens of at least 1 rood are attached, there is no difficulty about the disposal of the contents.

The houses are usually situated conveniently for the labourer's work, so that they are generally found singly or in groups of not more than six. In more recent building schemes, however, an endeavour has been made to group more cottages together, with the object of providing some communal life.

While these cottages, built with Government assistance, were originally intended for agricultural labourers only, they can now be let to practically any person working in the district either for wages or on his own account without the help of any paid person other than members of his own family.

Further legislation is now in contemplation to enable the local authorities to make grants to owners of small houses for their repair and improvement. Half the cost incurred by the local authorities in making such grants will be met by the Government.

3. AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

In Northern Ireland, there is, under the Ministry of Agriculture, working in conjunction with county committees of agriculture, a complete system of technical instruction and education in agriculture. A number of itinerant instructors in agriculture and poultry-keeping are located in different districts and visit the farming community discussing difficulties and endeavouring to find solutions. In the more backward districts, the instructors are reinforced by agricultural overseers, who operate in smaller areas and may be regarded as being in almost daily contact with the small-holders. During the winter months, the instructors hold day classes, where farmers' sons receive a course of training, extending from October to March, in technical and scientific agriculture. The pupils in attendance are all engaged in practical farm work, and the winter period is selected because this is a period when farm operations are slack.

Similarly, the instructors in poultry-keeping, who are all women, hold classes which are attended by farmers' daughters who are also actually engaged in farm work.

The next step in the educational ladder is the Agricultural and Horticultural College located at Greenmount, County Antrim, and thus centrally situated. Each year, a session is held at this college lasting from October until July, which is attended by between forty and fifty pupils, practically all farmers' sons who are conversant with practical farming. The course gives a thorough training in practical, technical and scientific agriculture, and the need for general culture is not overlooked. Admission to the college is mainly by means of scholarships awarded by county committees of agriculture, so that, generally speaking, the instruction given is free. Practically all the pupils attending the college return to their farms, but a small number of the more brilliant pupils proceed by way of scholarships awarded by the Ministry to the Agricultural Faculty of the Queen's University of Belfast, where they receive a four-year course leading to the degree of B.Sc. in Agriculture. Those who obtain this degree, as a rule, obtain employment on the research, teaching, and technical staffs of the Ministry or of county committees of agriculture. It is thus possible for a farmer's son of outstanding ability to proceed from the local agricultural classes to Greenmount College and then to the university, and so become eligible for official employment in connection with agriculture.

The Ministry of Education for Northern Ireland, as part of the general curriculum of the public elementary schools, endeavours to foster an interest in rural life and pursuits, particularly in the children attending rural schools.

4. SOCIAL WELFARE

There is in Northern Ireland a body named the Rural Development Council. The activities of this Council consist in promoting schemes which aim at the improvement of the conditions of life of the rural population. The Council acts as an advisory body to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees, who finance such schemes as meet their approval.

The Council has been in existence for seven years and during that time has given grants for the following : Young farmers' clubs, women's institutes, dramatic festivals, music societies, youth hostels, adult education and village halls.

In addition, an organiser has been appointed for physical training in unemployed clubs, and a survey is at present being carried out to examine the possibilities of allotments and cottage homesteads.

The young farmers' clubs and the women's institutes do not differ very much from similar organisations in England, but the social conditions in Northern Ireland give them a value out of all proportion to their size. There is a complete freedom from political bias, and the importance of the rural outlook is emphasised.

There are sixty young farmers' clubs with a membership of about 3,000. The members meet once a month for lectures on various aspects of farming and for debates on current topics. They enter for, and do extremely well at, stock judging, butter making, ploughing and horticulture competitions at the various local agricultural shows. Teams got first place in the international stock-judging competitions in England, and poultry judging at the Royal Ulster Society's Show in 1938. A cup recently given for the gardens of members of the young farmers' clubs has revived an interest which was badly needed in the flower garden round the farm.

The number of women's institutes has risen from sixteen in 1937 to twenty-one at the present date, with a membership of about a thousand. Considerable interest has been aroused in classes for soft-toy making, basketry and rug-making, and demonstrations are given in cookery and dressmaking. The women's institutes help to train the country-women to take a more active part in the various schemes for social welfare. Handicrafts exhibitions are held, and, by affiliation with the movement in England and with the associated country-women of the world, they are kept in touch with all that is being done by, and on behalf of, women in rural areas.

The Rural Development Council fosters the amateur dramatic movement by providing week-end drama schools and by helping rural dramatic festivals. Though not in any way comparable

to village drama in England in numbers or technique, there is yet a growing interest through the countryside.

The Council also gives grants and loans for the erection and equipment of village halls to be managed by a committee which is representative of every organisation in the district.

Grants are given to the Youth Hostel Association for the furnishing and erection of hostels. This movement has resulted in the setting-up of an excellent chain of twenty-two hostels, but the young people who take advantage of them are usually town-dwellers.

There are a number of small rural orchestral societies in Northern Ireland, but the main interest in music is in vocal and choral work. So far, the Council has helped mainly by arranging for visiting performers to the British Music Society in Belfast to play in the country towns at reduced fees.

A grant is also given to the Joint Committee for Adult Education to promote lecture courses in the smaller towns throughout the winter months, and the movement seems likely to be of very great advantage to rural districts in future years.

A Northern Ireland Council of Social Service has recently been established with the object of promoting the development and extension of voluntary activities amongst the unemployed, both in rural and urban centres. The Council receives a grant from the Ministry of Labour for Northern Ireland. So far as the needs of the unemployed are concerned, the Council will operate along lines similar to those followed by the National Council of Social Service in England and Wales.

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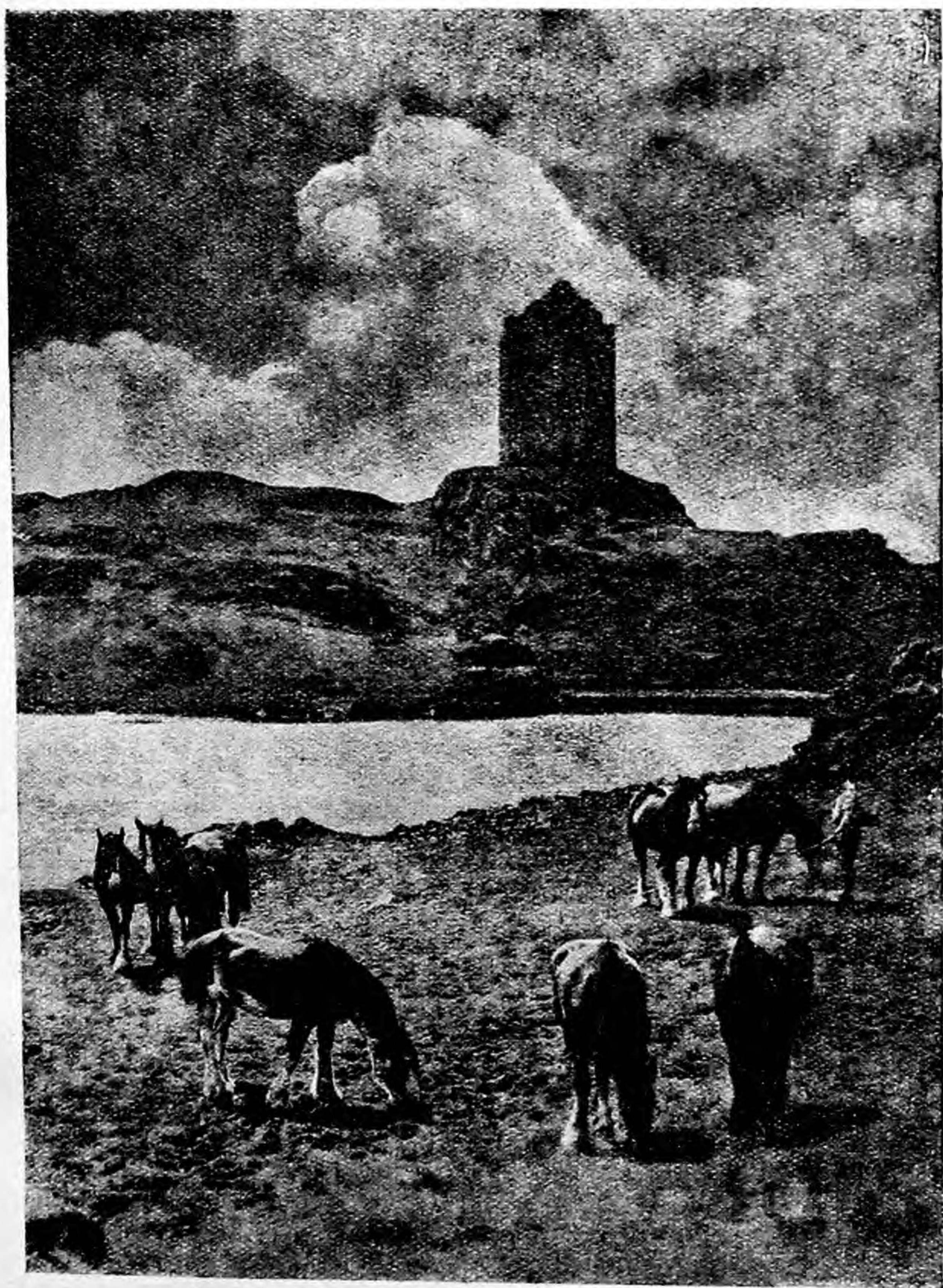
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